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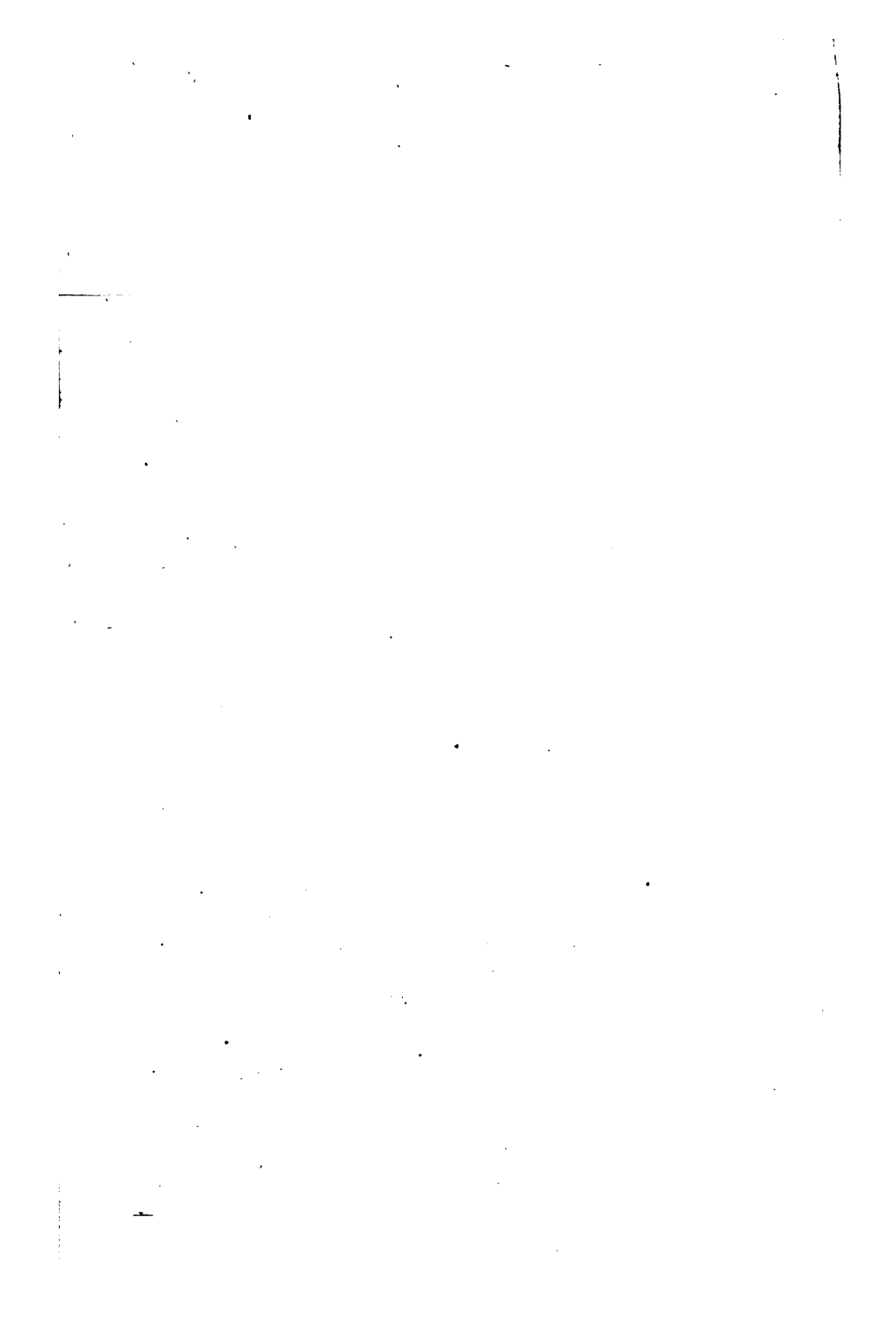
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ACROSS THE ZODIAC.



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ACROSS THE ZODIAC:

The Story of a Wrecked Record

DECIPHERED, TRANSLATED AND EDITED

BY

PERCY GREG

AUTHOR OF "THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE" ETC

"Thoughts he sends to each planet,
Uranus, Venus, and Mars;
Soars to the Centre to span it,
Numbers the infinite Stars."

Courthope's Paradise of Birds

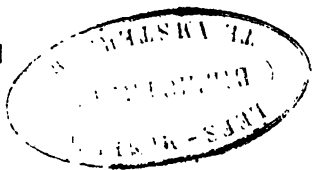
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ACROSS THE ZODIAC.

CHAPTER XIV.

BY SEA.

AN hour after sunrise next morning, Esmo, his son, and our host accompanied us to the vessel in which we were to make the principal part of our journey. We were received by an officer of the royal Court, who was to accompany us during the rest of our journey, and from whom, Esmo assured me, I might obtain the fullest information regarding the various objects of interest, to visit which we had adopted an unusual and circuitous course. We embarked on a gulf running generally from east to west, about midway between the northern tropic and the arctic circle. As this was the summer of the northern hemisphere, we should thus enjoy a longer day, and should not suffer from the change of climate. After taking leave of our friends, we went down below to take possession of the fore part of the vessel, which was assigned as our exclusive quarters. Immediately in front of the machine-room, which occupied the centre of the vessel, were two cabins, about sixteen feet square, reaching from side to side. Beyond these, opening out of a passage running

along one side, were two smaller cabins about eight feet long. All these apartments were furnished and ornamented with the luxury and elegance of chambers in the best houses on shore. In the foremost of the larger cabins were a couple of desks, and three or four writing or easy chairs. In the outer cabin nearest to the engine-room, and entered immediately by the ladder descending from the deck, was fixed a low central table. In all we found abundance of those soft exquisitely covered and embroidered cushions which in Mars, as in Oriental countries, are the most essential and most luxurious furniture. The officer had quarters in the stern of the vessel, which was an exact copy of the fore part. But the first of these rooms was considered as public or neutral ground. Leaving Eveena below, I went on deck to examine, before she started, the construction of the vessel. Her entire length was about one hundred and eighty feet, her depth, from the flat deck to the wide keel, about one half of her breadth; the height of the cabins not much more than eight feet; her draught, when most completely lightened, not more than four feet. Her electric machinery drew in and drove out with great force currents of water which propelled her with a speed greater than that afforded by the most powerful paddles. It also pumped in or out, at whatever depth, the quantity of water required as ballast, not merely to steady the vessel, but to keep her in position on the surface or to sink her to the level at which the pilot might choose to sail. At either end was fixed a steering screw, much resembling the tail-fin of a fish, capable of striking sideways, upwards, or downwards, and directing our course accordingly.

Ergimo, our escort, had not yet reached middle age, but was a man of exceptional intellect and unusual knowledge. He had made many voyages, and had occupied for some time an important official post on one of those Arctic continents which are inhabited only by the hunters employed in collecting the furs and skins furnished exclusively by these lands. The shores of the gulf were lofty, rocky, and uninteresting. It was difficult to see any object on shore from the deck of the vessel, and I assented, therefore, without demur, after the first hour of the voyage, to his proposal that the lights, answering to our hatches, should be closed, and that the vessel should pursue her course below the surface. This was the more desirable that, though winds and storms are, as I have said, rare, these long and narrow seas with their lofty shores are exposed to rough currents, atmospheric and marine, which render a voyage on the surface no more agreeable than a passage in average weather across the Bay of Biscay. After descending I was occupied for some time in studying, with Ergimo's assistance, the arrangement of the machinery, and the simple process by which electric force is generated in quantities adequate to any effort at a marvellously small expenditure of material. In this form the Martialists assert that they obtain without waste all the potential energy stored in . . . [About half a score lines, or two pages of an ordinary octavo volume like this, are here illegible.] She (Eveena?) was somewhat pale, but rose quickly, and greeted me with a smile of unaffected cheerfulness, and was evidently surprised as well as pleased that I was content to remain alone with her, our conversation turning chiefly

on the lessons of last night. Our time passed quickly till, about the middle of the day, we were startled by a shock which, as I thought, must be due to our having run aground or struck against a rock. But when I passed into the engine-room, Ergimo explained that the pilot was nowise in fault. We had encountered one of those inconveniences, hardly to be called perils, which are peculiar to the waters of Mars. Though animals hostile or dangerous to man have been almost extirpated upon the land, creatures of a type long since supposed to be extinct on Earth still haunt the depths of the Martial seas; and one of these—a real sea-serpent of above a hundred feet in length and perhaps eight feet in circumference—had attacked our vessel, entangling the steering screw in his folds and trying to crush it, checking, at the same time, by his tremendous force the motion of the vessel.

“We shall soon get rid of him, though,” said Ergimo, as I followed him to the stern, to watch with great interest the method of dealing with the monster, whose strange form was visible through a thick crystal pane in the stern-plate. The asphyxiator could not have been used without great risk to ourselves. But several tubes, filled with a soft material resembling cork, originally the pith of a Martial cane of great size, were inserted in the floor, sides, and deck of the vessel, and through the centre of each of these passed a strong metallic wire of great conducting power. Two or three of those in the stern were placed in contact with some of the electric machinery by which the rudder was usually turned, and through them were sent rapid and energetic currents, whose passage rendered the

covering of the wires, notwithstanding their great conductivity, too hot to be touched. We heard immediately a smothered sound of extraordinary character, which was, in truth, no other than a scream deadened partly by the water, partly by the thick metal sheet interposed between us and the element. The steering screw was set in rapid motion, and at first revolving with some difficulty, afterwards moving faster and more regularly, presently released us. Its rotation was stopped, and we resumed our course. The serpent had relaxed his folds, stunned by the shock, but had not disentangled himself from the screw, till its blades, no longer checked by the tremendous force of his original grasp, striking him a series of terrific blows, had broken the vertebræ and paralysed if not killed the monstrous enemy.

At each side of the larger chambers and of the engine-room were fixed small thick circular windows, through which we could see from time to time the more remarkable objects in the water. We passed along one curious submarine bank, built somewhat like our coral rocks, not by insects, however, but by shellfish, which, fixing themselves as soon as hatched on the shells below or around them, extended slowly upward and sideways. As each of these creatures perished, the shell, about half the size of an oyster, was filled with the same sort of material as that of which its hexagonal walls were originally formed, drawn in by the surrounding and still living neighbours; and thus, in the course of centuries, were constructed solid reefs of enormous extent. One of these had run right across the gulf, forming a complete bridge, ceasing, however, within

some five feet of the surface; but on this a regular roadway had been constructed by human art and mechanical labour, while underneath, at the usual depth of thirty feet, several tunnels had been pierced, each large enough to admit the passage of a single vessel of the largest size. At every fourth hour our vessel rose to the surface to renew her atmosphere, which was thus kept purer than that of an ordinary Atlantic packet between decks, while the temperature was maintained at an agreeable point by the warmth diffused from the electric machinery.

On the sixth day of our voyage, we reached a point where the Gulf of Serocasfe divides, a sharp jutting cape or peninsula parting its waters. We took the northern branch, about fifteen miles in width, and here, rising to the surface and steering a zigzag course from coast to coast, I was enabled to see something of the character of this most extraordinary strait. Its walls at first were no less than 2000 feet in height, so that at all times we were in sight, so to speak, of land. A road had been cut along the sea-level, and here and there tunnels ascending through the rock rendered this accessible from the plateau above. The strata, as upon Earth, were of various character, none of them very thick, seldom reproducing exactly the geology of our own planet, but seldom very widely deviating in character from the rocks with which we are acquainted. The lowest were evidently of the same hard, fused, compressed character as those which our terminology calls plutonic. Above these were masses which, like the carboniferous strata of Earth, recalled the previous existence of a richer but less

highly organised form of vegetation than at present exists anywhere upon the surface. Intermixed with these were beds of the peculiar submarine shell-rock whose formation I have just described. Above these again come strata of diluvial gravel, and about 400 feet below the surface rocks that bore evident traces of a glacial period. As we approached the lower end of the gulf the shores sloped constantly downward, and where they were no more than 600 feet in height I was able to distinguish an upper stratum of some forty yards in depth, preserving through its whole extent traces of human life and even of civilisation. This implied, if fairly representative of the rest of the planet's crust, an existence of man upon its surface ten, twenty, or even a hundred-fold longer than he is supposed to have enjoyed upon Earth. About noon on the seventh day we entered the canal which connects this arm of the gulf with the sea of the northern temperate zone. It varies in height from 400 to 600 feet, in width from 100 to 300 yards, its channel never exceeds 20 feet in depth. Ergimo explained that the length had been thought to render a tunnel unsuitable, as the ordinary method of ventilation could hardly have been made to work, and to ventilate such a tunnel through shafts sunk to so great a depth would have been almost as costly as the method actually adopted. A much smaller breadth might have been thought to suffice, and was at first intended; but it was found that the current in a narrow channel, the outer sea being many inches higher than the water of the gulf, would have been too rapid and violent for safety. The work had occupied fifteen Martial years,

and had been opened only for some eight centuries. The water was not more than twenty feet in depth ; but the channel was so perfectly scoured by the current that no obstacle had ever arisen and no expense had been incurred to keep it clear. We entered the Northern sea where a bay ran up some half dozen miles towards the end of the gulf, shortening the canal by this distance. The bay itself was shallow, the only channel being scarcely wider than the canal, and created or preserved by the current setting in to the latter; a current which offered a very perceptible resistance to our course, and satisfied me that had the canal been no wider than the convenience of navigation would have required in the absence of such a stream, its force would have rendered the work altogether useless. We crossed the sea, holding on in the same direction, and a little before sunset moored our vessel at the wharf of a small harbour, along the sides of which was built the largest town of this subarctic land-belt, a village of some fifty houses named Askinta.

CHAPTER XV.

FUR-HUNTING.

ERGIMO landed to make arrangements for the chase, to witness which was the principal object of this deviation from what would otherwise have been our most convenient course. Not only would it be possible to take part in the pursuit of the wild fauna of the continent, but I also hoped to share in a novel sport, not unlike a whale-hunt in Baffin's Bay. A large inland sea, occupying no inconsiderable part of the area of this belt, lay immediately to the northward, and one wide arm thereof extended within a few miles of Askinta, a distance which, notwithstanding the interposition of a mountain range, might be crossed in a couple of hours. One or two days at most would suffice for both adventures. I had not yet mentioned my intention to Eveena. During the voyage I had been much alone with her, and it was then only that our real acquaintance began. Till then, however close our attachment, we were, in knowledge of each other's character and thought, almost as strangers. While her painful timidity had in some degree worn off, her anxious and watchful deference was even more marked than before. True to the strange ideas derived chiefly from her training, partly from her own natural

character, she was the more careful to avoid giving the slightest pain or displeasure, as she ceased to fear that either would be immediately and intentionally visited upon herself. She evidently thought that on this account there was the greater danger lest a series of trivial annoyances, unnoticed at the time, might cool the affection she valued so highly. Diffident of her own charms, she knew how little hold the women of her race generally have on the hearts of men after the first fever of passion has cooled. It was difficult for her to realise that her thoughts or wishes could truly interest me, that compliance with her inclinations could be an object, or that I could be seriously bent on teaching her to speak frankly and openly. But as this new idea became credible and familiar, her unaffected desire to comply with all that was expected from her drew out her hitherto undeveloped powers of conversation, and enabled me day by day to appreciate more thoroughly the real intelligence and soundness of judgment concealed at first by her shyness, and still somewhat obscured by her childlike simplicity and absolute inexperience. In the latter respect, however, she was, of course, at the less disadvantage with a stranger to the manners and life of her world. A more perfectly charming companion it would have been difficult to desire and impossible to find. If at first I had been secretly inclined to reproach her with exaggerated timidity, it became more and more evident that her personal fears were due simply to that nervous susceptibility which even men of reputed courage have often displayed in situations of sudden and wholly unfamiliar peril. Her tendency to overrate all dangers,

not merely as they affected herself, but as they might involve others, and above all her husband, I ascribed to the ideas and habits of thought now for so many centuries hereditary among a people in whom the fear of annihilation—and the absence of all the motives that impel men on earth to face danger and death with calmness, or even to enjoy the excitement of deadly peril—have extinguished manhood itself.

I could not, however, conceal from Eveena that I was about to leave her for an adventure which could not but seem to her foolhardy and motiveless. She was more than terrified when she understood that I really intended to join the professional hunters in an enterprise which, even on their part, is regarded by their countrymen with a mixture of admiration and contempt, as one wherein only the hope of large remuneration would induce any sensible man to share; and which, from my utter ignorance of its conditions, must be obviously still more dangerous to me. The confidence she was slowly learning from what seemed to her extravagant indulgence, to me simply the consideration due to a rational being, wife or comrade, slave or free, first found expression in the freedom of her loving though provoking expostulations.

"You must be tired of me," she said at last, "if you are so ready to run the risk of parting out of mere curiosity."

"Sheer petulance!" I answered. "You know well that you are dearer to me every day as I learn to understand you better; but a man cannot afford to play the coward because marriage has given new value to life. And you might remember that I have threefold the strength which

emboldens your hunters to incur all the dangers that seem to your fancy so terrible."

That no shade of mere cowardice or feminine affectation influenced her remonstrance was evident from her next words.

"Well, then, if you will go, however improper and outrageous the thing may be, let me go with you. I cannot bear to wait alone, fancying at every moment what may be happening to you, and fearing to see them carry you back wounded or killed."

Touched by the unselfishness of her terror, and feeling that there was some truth in her representation of the state of mind in which she would spend the hours of my absence, I tried to quiet her by caresses and soft words. But these she received as symptoms of yielding on my part; and her persistence brought upon her at last the resolute and somewhat sharp rebuke with which men think it natural and right to repress the excesses of feminine fear.

"This is nonsense, Eveena. You cannot accompany me; and, if you could, your presence would multiply tenfold the danger to me, and utterly unnerve me if any real difficulty should call for presence of mind. You must be content to leave me in the hands of Providence, and allow me to judge what becomes a man, and what results are worth the risks they may involve. I hear Ergimo's step on deck, and I must go and learn from him what arrangements he has been able to make for to-morrow."

My escort had found no difficulty in providing for the fulfilment of both my wishes. We were to beat the forests which covered the southern seaboard in the

neighbourhood, driving our game out upon the open ground, where alone we should have a chance of securing it. By noon we might hope to have seen enough of this sport, and to find ourselves at no great distance from that part of the inland sea where a yet more exciting chase was to employ the rest of the day. Failing to bring both adventures within the sixteen hours of light which at this season and in this latitude we should enjoy, we were to bivouac for the night on the northern sea-coast and pursue our aquatic game in the morning of the morrow, returning before dark to our vessel.

Ergimo, however, was more of Eveena's mind than of mine. "I have complied," he said, "with your wishes, as the Camptâ ordered me to do. But I am equally bound, by his orders and by my duty, to tell you that in my opinion you are running risks altogether out of proportion to any object our adventure can serve. Scarcely any of the creatures we shall hunt are other than very formidable. Even the therne, with the spikes on its fore-limbs, can inflict painful if not dangerous wounds, and its bite is said to be not unfrequently venomous. You are not used to our methods of hunting, to the management of the *caldecta*, or to the use of our weapons. I can conceive no reason why you should incur what is at any rate a considerable chance, not merely of death, but of defeating the whole purpose of your extraordinary journey, simply to do or to see the work on which we peril only the least valuable lives among us."

I was about to answer him even more decidedly than I had replied to Eveena, when a pressure on my arm

drew my eyes in the other direction; and, to my extreme mortification, I perceived that Eveena herself, in all-absorbing eagerness to learn the opinion of an intelligent and experienced hunter, had stolen on deck and had heard all that had passed. I was too much vexed to make any other reply to Ergimo's argument than the single word, "I shall go." Really angry with her for the first and last time, but not choosing to express my displeasure in the presence of a third person, I hurried Eveena down the ladder into our cabin.

"Tell me," I said, "what, according to your own rules of feminine reserve and obedience, you deserve? What would one of your people say to a wife who followed him without leave into the company of a stranger, to listen to that which she knew she was not meant to hear?"

She answered by throwing off her veil and head-dress, and standing up silent before me.

"Answer me, child," I repeated, more than half appeased by the mute appeal of her half-raised eyes and submissive attitude. "I know you will not tell me that you have not broken all the restraints of your own laws and customs. What would your father, for instance, say to such an escapade?"

She was silent, till the touch of my hand, contradicting perhaps the harshness of my words, encouraged her to lift her eyes, full of tears, to mine.

"Nothing," was her very unexpected reply.

"Nothing?" I rejoined. "If you can tell me that you have not done wrong, I shall be sorry to have reproved you so sharply."

"I shall tell you no such lie!" she answered

almost indignantly. "You asked what would be *said*."

I was fairly at a loss. The figure which Martial grammarians call "the suppressed alternative" is a great favourite, and derives peculiar force from the varied emphasis their syntax allows. But, resolved not to understand a meaning much more distinctly conveyed in her words than in my translation, I replied, "*I shall say nothing then, except—don't do it again;*" and I extricated myself promptly if ignominiously from the dilemma, by leaving the cabin and closing the door, so sharply and decidedly as to convey a distinct intimation that it was not again to be opened.

We breakfasted earlier than usual. My gentle bride had been subdued into a silence, not sullen, but so sad that when her wistful eyes followed my every movement as I prepared to start, I could willingly, to bring back their brightness, have renounced the promise of the day. But this must not be; and turning to take leave on the threshold, I said—

"Be sure I shall come to no harm; and if I did, the worst pang of death would be the memory of the first sharp words I have spoken to you, and which, I confess, were an ill return for the inconvenient expression of your affectionate anxiety."

"Do not speak so," she half whispered. "I deserved any mark of your displeasure; I only wish I could persuade you that the sharpest sting lies in the lips we love. Do remember, since you would not let me run the slightest risk of harm, that if you come to hurt you will have killed me."

"Rest assured I shall come to no serious ill. I hope

this evening to laugh with you at your alarms ; and so long as you do not see me either in the flesh or in the spirit, you may know that I am safe. I *could not* leave you for ever without meeting you again."

This speech, which I should have ventured in no other presence, would hardly have established my lunacy more decisively in Martial eyes than in those of Terrestrial common sense. It conveyed, however, a real if not sufficient consolation to Eveena ; the idea it implied being not wholly unfamiliar to a daughter of the Star. I was surprised that, almost shrinking from my last embrace, Eveena suddenly dropped her veil around her ; till, turning, I saw that Ergimo was standing at the top of the ladder leading to the deck, and just in sight.

"I will send word," he said, addressing himself to me, but speaking for her ears, "of your safety at noon and at night. So far as my utmost efforts can ensure it you will be safe ; an obligation higher, and enforced by sanctions graver, than even the Camptâ's command forbids me to lead a *brother* into peril, and fail to bring him out of it."

The significant word was spoken in so low a tone that it could not possibly reach the ears of our companions of the chase, who had mustered on shore within a few feet of the vessel. But Eveena evidently caught both the sound and the meaning, and I was glad that they should convey to her a confidence which seemed to myself no better founded than her alarms. To me its only value lay in the friendly relation it established with one I had begun greatly to like. I relied on my own strength and nerve for all that human exertion

could do in such peril as we might encounter ; and, in a case in which these might fail me, I doubted whether even the one tie that has binding force on Mars would avail me much.

Immediately outside the town were waiting, saddled but not bridled, some score of the extraordinary riding-birds Eveena had described. The seat of the rider is on the back, between the wings ; but the saddle consists only of a sort of girth immediately in front, to which a pair of stirrups, resembling that of a lady's side-saddle, were attached. The creature that was to carry my unusual weight was the most powerful of all, but I felt some doubt whether even his strength might not break down. One of the hunters had charge of a carriage on which was fixed a cage containing two dozen birds of a dark greenish grey, about the size of a crow, and with the slender form, piercing eyes, and powerful beak of the falcon. They were not intended, however, to strike the prey, but simply to do the part of dogs in tracing out the game, and driving it from the woods into the open ground. Our birds, rising at once into the air, carried us some fifty feet above the tops of the trees. Here the chief huntsman took the guidance of the party, keeping in front of the line in which we were ranged, and watching through a pair of what might be called spectacles, save that a very short tube with double lenses was substituted for the single glass, the movement of the hawks, which had been released in the wood below us. These at first dispersed in every direction, extending at intervals from end to end of a line some three miles in length, and moving slowly forwards, followed by the hunters. A sharp call from one bird

on the left gathered the rest around him, and in a few moments the rustling and rushing of an invisible flock through the glades of the forest apprised us that we had started, though we could not see, the prey. Ergimo, who kept close beside me, and who had often witnessed the sport before, kept me informed of what was proceeding underneath us, of which I could see but little. Glimpses here and there showed that we were pursuing a numerous flock of large white-plumed or white-haired creatures, standing at most some four feet in height; but what they were, even whether birds or quadrupeds, their movements left me in absolute uncertainty. Worried and frightened by the falcons, which, however, never ventured to close upon them, they were gradually driven in the direction intended by the huntsman towards the open plain, which bordered the forest at a distance of about six miles to the northward. In half-an-hour after the "find," the leader of the flock broke out of the wood two or three hundred yards ahead of us, and was closely followed by his companions. I then recognised in the objects of the chase the strange *thernee* described by Eveena, whose long soft down furnished the cloak she wore on our visit to the Astronaut. Their general form, and especially the length and graceful curve of the neck, led one instinctively to regard them as birds; but the fore-limbs, drawn up as they ran, but now and then outstretched with a sweep to strike at a falcon that ventured imprudently near, had, in the distance, much more resemblance to the arm of a baboon than to the limb of any other creature, and bore no likeness whatever to the wing even of the bat. The object of the hunters was not to strike these crea-

tures from a distance, but to run them down and capture them by sheer exhaustion. This the great wing-power of the *caldectaa* enabled us to do, though by the time we had driven the thernee to bay my own Pegasus was fairly tired. The hunters, separating and spreading out in the form of a semicircle, assisted the movements of the hawks, driving the prey gradually into a narrow defile among the hills bordering the plain to the north-eastward, whose steep upward slope greatly hindered and fatigued creatures whose natural habitat consists of level plains or seabord forests. At last, under a steep half-precipitous rock which defended them in rear, and between clumps of trees which guarded either flank—protected by both overhead—the flock, at the call of their leader, took up a position which displayed an instinctive strategy, whereof an Indian or African chief might have been proud. The *caldectaa*, however, well knew the vast superiority of their own strength and of their formidable beaks, and did not hesitate to carry us close to but somewhat above the thernee, as these stood ranged in line with extended fore-limbs and snouts; the latter armed with teeth about an inch and a half in length tapering singly to a sharp point, the former with spikes stronger, longer, and sharper than those of the porcupine; but, as I satisfied myself by a subsequent inspection, formed by rudimentary, or, more properly speaking, transformed or degenerated quills. The bite was easily avoided. It was not so easy to keep out of reach of the powerful fore-limb while endeavouring to strike a fatal blow at the neck with the long rapier-like cutting weapons carried by the hunters. My own shorter and sharp sword, to which I

had trusted, preferring a familiar weapon to one, however suitable, to which I was not accustomed, left me no choice but to abandon the hope of active participation in the slaughter, or to venture dangerously near. Choosing the latter alternative, I received from the arm of the thernee I had singled out a blow which, caught upon my sword, very nearly smote it from my hand, and certainly would have disarmed at once any of my weaker companions. As it was, the stroke maimed the limb that delivered it; but with its remaining arm the creature maintained a fight so stubborn that, had both been available, the issue could not have been in my favour. This conflict reminded me singularly of an encounter with the mounted swordsmen of Scindiah and the Peishwah; all my experience of sword-play being called into use, and my brute opponent using its natural weapon with an instinctive skill not unworthy of comparison with that of a trained horse-soldier; at the same time that it constantly endeavoured to seize with its formidable snout either my own arm or the wing or body of the caldecta, which, however, was very well able to take care of itself. In fact, the prey was secured at last not by my sword but by a blow from the caldecta's beak, which pierced and paralysed the slender neck of our antagonist. Some twenty thernee formed the booty of a chase certainly novel, and possessing perhaps as many elements of peril and excitement as that finest of Earthly sports which the affected cynicism of Anglo-Indian speech degrades by the name of "pig-sticking."

When the falcons had been collected and recaged, and the bodies of the thernee consigned to a carriage

brought up for the purpose by a subordinate who had watched the hunters' course, our birds, from which we had dismounted, were somewhat rested; and Ergimo informed me that another and more formidable, as well as more valuable, prey was thought to be in sight a few miles off. Mounted on a fresh bird, and resolutely closing my ears to his urgent and reasonable dissuasion, I joined the smaller party which was detached for this purpose. As we were carried slowly at no great distance from the ground, managing our birds with ease by a touch on either side of the neck—they are spurred at need by a slight electric shock communicated from the hilt of the sword, and are checked by a forcible pressure on the wings—I asked Ergimo why the thernee were not rather shot than hunted, since utility, not sport, governs the method of capturing the wild beasts of Mars.

"We have," he replied, "two weapons adapted to strike at a distance. The asphyxiator is too heavy to be carried far or fast, and pieces of the shell inflict such injuries upon everything in the immediate neighbourhood of the explosion, as to render it useless where the value of the prey depends upon the condition of its skin. Our other and much more convenient, if less powerful, projective weapon has also its own disadvantage. It can be used only at short distances; and at these it is apt to burn and tear a skin so soft and delicate as that of the thernee. Moreover, it so terrifies the caldecta as to render it unmanageable; and we are compelled to dismount before using it, as you may presently see. Four or five of our party are now

armed with it, and I wish you had allowed me to furnish you with one."

"I prefer," I answered, "my own weapon, an air-gun which I can fire sixteen times without reloading, and which will kill at a hundred yards' distance. With a weapon unknown to me I might not only fail altogether, but I might not improbably do serious injury, by my clumsiness and inexperience, to my companions."

"I wish, nevertheless," he said, "that you carried the *mordyta*. You will have need of an efficient weapon if you dismount to share the attack we are just about to make. But I entreat you not to do so. You can see it all in perfect safety, if only you will keep far enough away to avoid danger from the fright of your bird."

As he spoke, we had come into proximity to our new game, a large and very powerful animal, about four feet high at the shoulders, and about six feet from the head to the root of the tail. The latter carries, as that of the lion was fabled to do, a final claw, not to lash the creature into rage, but for the more practical purpose of striking down an enemy endeavouring to approach it in flank or rear. Its hide, covered with a long beautifully soft fur, is striped alternately with brown and yellow, the ground being a sort of silver-grey. The head resembles that of the lion, but without the mane, and is prolonged into a face and snout more like those of the wild boar. Its limbs are less unlike those of the feline genus than any other Earthly type, but have three claws and a hard pad in lieu of the soft cushion. The upper jaw is armed with two formidable tusks about twelve inches in

length, and projecting directly forwards. A blow from the claw-furnished tail would plough up the thigh or rip open the abdomen of a man. A stroke from one of the paws would fracture his skull, while a wound from the tusk in almost any part of the body must prove certainly fatal. Fortunately, the *kargynda* has not the swiftness of movement belonging to nearly all our feline races, otherwise its skins, the most valuable prize of the Martial hunter, would yearly be taken at a terrible cost of life. Two of these creatures were said to be reposing in a thick jungle of reeds bordering a narrow stream immediately in our front. The hunters, with Ergimo, now dismounted and advanced some two hundred yards in front of their birds, directing the latter to turn their heads in the opposite direction. I found some difficulty in making my wish to descend intelligible to the docile creature which carried me, and was still in the air when one of the enormous creatures we were hunting rushed out of its hiding-place. The nearest hunter, raising a shining metal staff about three and a half feet in length (having a crystal cylinder at the hinder end, about six inches in circumference, and occupying about one-third the entire length of the weapon), levelled it at the beast. A flash as of lightning darted through the air, and the creature rolled over. Another flash from a similar weapon in the hands of another hunter followed. By this time, however, my bird was entirely unmanageable, and what happened I learned afterwards from Ergimo. Neither of the two shots had wounded the creature, though the near passage of the first had for a moment stunned and overthrown him. His rush among the party dispersed

them all, but each being able to send forth from his piece a second flash of lightning, the monster was mortally wounded before they fairly started in pursuit of their scared birds, which—their attention being called by the roar of the animal, by the crash accompanying each flash, and probably above all by the restlessness of my own *caldecta* in their midst—had flown off to some distance. My bird, floundering forwards, flung me to the ground about two hundred yards from the jungle, fortunately at a greater distance from the dying but not yet utterly disabled prey. Its companion now came forth and stood over the tortured creature, licking its sores till it expired. By this time I had recovered the consciousness I had lost with the shock of my fall, and had ascertained that my gun was safe. I had but time to prepare and level it when, leaving its dead companion, the brute turned and charged me almost as rapidly as an infuriated elephant. I fired several times, and assured, if only from my skill as a marksman, that some of the shots had hit it, was surprised to see that at each it was only checked for a moment and then resumed its charge. It was so near now that I could aim with some confidence at the eye; and if, as I suspected, the previous shots had failed to pierce the hide, no other aim was likely to avail. I levelled, therefore, as steadily as I could at its blazing eyeballs and fired three or four shots, still without doing more than arrest or rather slacken its charge, each shot provoking a fearful roar of rage and pain. I fired my last within about twenty yards, and then, before I could draw my sword, was dashed to the ground with a violence that utterly stunned me. When I recovered my senses,

Ergimo was kneeling beside me pouring down my throat the contents of a small phial; and as I lifted my head and looked around, I saw the enormous carcass from under which I had been dragged lying dead almost within reach of my hand. One eye was pierced through the very centre, the other seriously injured. But such is the creature's tenacity of life, that, though three balls were actually in its brain, it had driven home its charge, though far too unconscious to make more than convulsive and feeble use of any of its formidable weapons. When I fell it stood for perhaps a second, and then dropped senseless upon my lower limbs, which were not a little bruised by its weight. That no bone was broken or dislocated by the shock, deadened though it must have been by the repeated pauses in the kargynda's charge and by its final exhaustion, was more than I expected or could understand. Before I rose to my feet, Ergimo had peremptorily insisted on the abandonment of the further excursion we had intended, declaring that he could not answer to his Sovereign, after so severe a lesson, for my exposure to any future peril. The Camptâ had sent him to bring me into his presence for purposes which would not be fulfilled by producing a lifeless carcass, or a maimed and helpless invalid; and the discipline of the Court and central Administration allowed no excuse for disobedience to orders or failure in duty. My protest was very quickly silenced. On attempting to stand, I found myself so shaken, torn, and shattered that I could not again mount a *caldecta* or wield a weapon; and was carried back to Askinta on a sort of inclined litter placed upon the carriage which had conveyed our booty.

I was mortified, as we approached the place where our vessel lay, to observe a veiled female figure on the deck. Eveena's quick eye had noted our return some minutes before, and inferred from the early abandonment of the chase some serious accident. Happily our party were so disposed that I had time to assume the usual position before she caught sight of me. I could not, however, deceive her by a desperate effort to walk steadily and unaided. She stood by quietly and calmly while the surgeon of the hunters dressed my hurts, observing exactly how the bandages and lotions were applied. Only when we were left alone did she in any degree give way to an agitation by which she feared to increase my evident pain and feverishness. It was impossible to satisfy her that black bruises and broad gashes meant no danger, and would be healed by a few days' rest. But when she saw that I could talk and smile as usual, she was unsparing in her attempts to coax from me a pledge that I would never again peril life or limb to gratify my curiosity regarding the very few pursuits in which, for the highest remuneration, Martialists can be induced to incur the probability of injury and the chance of that death they so abjectly dread. Scarcely less reluctant to repeat the scolding she felt so acutely than to employ the methods of rebuke she deemed less severe, I had no little difficulty in evading her entreaties. Only a very decided request to drop the subject at once and for ever, enforced on her conscience by reminding her that it would be enforced no otherwise, at last obtained me peace without the sacrifice of liberty.

CHAPTER XVI.

TROUBLED WATERS.

WE were now in Martial N. latitude 57° , in a comparatively open part of the narrow sea which encloses the northern land-belt, and to the south-eastward lay the only channel by which this sea communicates with the main ocean of the southern hemisphere. Along this we took our course. Rather against Ergimo's advice, I insisted on remaining on the surface, as the sea was tolerably calm. Eveena, with her usual self-suppression, professed to prefer the free air, the light of the long day, and such amusement as the sight of an occasional sea-monster or shoal of fishes afforded, to the fainter light and comparative monotony of submarine travelling. Ergimo, who had in his time commanded the hunters of the Arctic Sea, was almost as completely exempt as myself from sea-sickness; but I was surprised to find that the crew disliked, and, had they ventured, would have grumbled at, the change, being so little accustomed to any long superficial voyage as to suffer like landmen from rough weather. The difference between sailing on and below the surface is so great, both in comfort and in the kind of skill and knowledge required, that the seamen of passenger and of mercantile vessels are classes much more distinct than those of the mercantile and

national marine of England, or any other maritime Power on Earth. I consented readily that, except on the rare occasions when the heavens were visible, the short night, from the fall of the evening to the dissipation of the morning mists, should be passed under water. I have said that gales are comparatively rare and the tides insignificant ; but the narrow and exceedingly long channels of the Martial seas, with the influence of a Solar movement from north to south more extensive though slower than that which takes place between our Winter and Summer Solstices, produce currents, atmospheric and oceanic, and sudden squalls that often give rise to that worst of, all disturbances of the surface, known as a "chopping sea." When we crossed the tropic and came fairly into the channel separating the western coast of the continent on which the Astronaut had landed from the eastern seaboard of that upon whose southern coast I was presently to disembark, this disturbance was even worse than, except on peculiarly disagreeable occasions, in the Straits of Dover. After enduring this for two or three hours, I observed that Eveena had stolen from her seat beside me on the deck.

Since we left Askinta her spirits had been unusually variable. She had been sometimes lively and almost excitable ; more generally quiet, depressed, and silent even beyond her wont. Still, her manner and bearing were always so equable, gentle, and docile that, accustomed to the caprices of the sex on Earth, I had hardly noticed the change. I thought, however, that she was to-day nervous and somewhat pale ; and as she did not return, after permitting the pilot to seek a calmer stratum at some five fathoms depth, I followed Eveena

into our cabin or chamber. Standing with her back to the entrance and with a goblet to her lips, she did not hear me till I had approached within arm's length. She then started violently, so agitated that the colour faded at once from her countenance, leaving it white as in a swoon, then as suddenly returning, flushed her neck and face, from the emerald shoulder clasps to the silver snood, with a pink deeper than that of her robe.

"I am very sorry I startled you," I said. "You are certainly ill, or you would not be so easily upset."

I laid my hand as I spoke on her soft tresses, but she withdrew from the touch, sinking down among the cushions. Leaving her to recover her composure, I took up the half-empty cup she had dropped on the central table. Thirsty myself, I had almost drained without tasting it, when a little half-stifled cry of dismay checked me. The moment I removed the cup from my mouth I perceived its flavour—the unmistakable taste of the *dravadoné* ("courage cup"), so disagreeable to us both, which we had shared on our bridal evening. Wetting with one drop the test-stone attached to my watch-chain, it presented the local discoloration indicating the narcotic poison which is the chief ingredient of this compound.

"I don't think this is wise, child," I said, turning once more to Eveena. To my amazement, far from having recovered the effect of her surprise, she was yet more overcome than at first; crouching among the cushions with her head bent down over her knees, and covering her face with her hands. Reclining in the soft pile, I held her in my arms, overcoming perforce what seemed hysterical reluctance; but when I would

have withdrawn the little hands, she threw herself on my knee, burying her face in the cushions.

"It is very wicked," she sobbed; "I cannot ask you to forgive me."

"Forgive what, my child? Eveena, you are certainly ill. Calm yourself, and don't try to talk just now."

"I am not ill, I assure you," she faltered, resisting the arm that sought to raise her; "but . . ."

In my hands, however, she was powerless as an infant; and I would hear nothing till I held her gathered within my arm and her two hands fast in my right. Now that I could look into the face she strove to avert, it was clear that she was neither hysterical nor simply ill; her agitation, however unreasonable and extravagant, was real.

"What troubles you, my own? I promise you not to say one word of reproach; I only want to understand with what you so bitterly reproach yourself."

"But you cannot help being angry," she urged, "if you understand what I have done. It is the *charny*, which I never tasted till that night, and never ought to have tasted again. I know you cannot forgive me; only take my fault for granted, and don't question me."

These incoherent words threw the first glimpse of light on the meaning of her distress and penitence. I doubt if the best woman in Christendom would so reproach and abase herself, if convicted of even a worse sin than the secret use of those stimulants for which the *charny* is a Martial equivalent. No Martialist would dream of poisoning his blood and besotting his brain with alcohol in any form. But their opiates

affect a race addicted to physical repose, to sensuous enjoyment rather than to sensual excitement, and to lucid intellectual contemplation, with a sense of serene delight as supremely delicious to their temperament as the dreamy illusions of haschisch to the Turk, the fierce frenzy of bhang to the Malay, or the wild excitement of brandy or Geneva to the races of Northern Europe. But as with the luxury of intoxication in Europe, so in Mars indulgence in these drugs, freely permitted to the one sex, is strictly forbidden by opinion and domestic rule to the other. A lady discovered in the use of *charny* is as deeply disgraced as an European matron detected in the secret enjoyment of spirits and cigars; and her lord and master takes care to render her sufficiently conscious of her fault.

And there was something stranger here than a violation of the artificial restraint of sex. Slightly and seldom as the Golden Circle touches the lines defining personal or social morality—carefully as the Founder has abstained from imposing an ethical code of his own, or attaching to his precepts any rule not directly derived from the fundamental tenets or necessary to the cohesion of the Order—he had expressed in strong terms his dread and horror of narcotism; the use for pleasure's sake, not to relieve pain or nervous excitement, of drugs which act, as he said, through the brain upon the soul. His judgment, expressed with unusual directness and severity and enforced by experience, has become with his followers a tradition not less imperative than the most binding of their laws. It was so held, above all, in that household in which Eveena and I had first learnt the "lore of the Starlight." Esmo, indeed, regarded not

merely as an unscientific superstition, but as blasphemous folly, the rejection of any means of restoring health or relieving pain which Providence has placed within human reach. But he abhorred the use for pleasure's sake of poisons affirmed to reduce the activity and in the long-run to impair the energies of the mind, and weaken the moral sense and the will, more intensely than the strictest follower of the Arabian Prophet abhors the draughts which deprive man of the full use of the senses, intelligence, and conscience which Allah has bestowed, and degrade him below the brute. Esmo's children, moreover, were not more strictly compelled to respect the letter than carefully instructed in the principle of every command for which he claimed their obedience.

But in such measure as Eveena's distress became intelligible, the fault of which she accused herself became incredible. I could not believe that she could be wilfully disloyal to me—still less that she could have suddenly broken through the fixed ideas of her whole life, the principles engraved on her mind by education more stringently than the maxims of the Koran or the Levitical Law on the children of Ishmael or of Israel; and this while the impressive rites of Initiation, the imprecation at which I myself had shuddered, were fresh in her memory—their impression infinitely deepened, moreover, by the awful mystery of that Vision of which even yet we were half afraid to speak to one another. While I hesitated to reply, gathering up as well as I could the thread of these thoughts as they passed in a few seconds through my mind, my left hand touched an object hidden in my bride's zone. I

drew out a tiny crystal phial three parts full, taken, as I saw, from the medicine-chest Esmo had carefully stocked and as carefully fastened. As, holding this, I turned again to her, Eveena repeated: "Punish, but don't question me!"

"My own," I said, "you are far more punished already than you deserve or I can bear to see. How did you get this?"

Releasing her hands, she drew from the folds of her robe the electric keys, which, by a separate combination, would unlock each of my cases;—without which it was impossible to open or force them.

"Yes, I remember; and you were surprised that I trusted them to you. And now you expect me to believe that you have abused that trust, deceived me, broken a rule which in your father's house and by all our Order is held sacred as the rings of the Signet, for a drug which twelve days ago you disliked as much as I?"

"It is true."

The words were spoken with downcast eyes, in the low faltering tone natural to a confession of disgrace.

"It is not true, Eveena; or if true in form, false in matter. If it were possible that you could wish to deceive me, you knew it could not be for long."

"I meant to be found out," she interrupted, "only not yet."

She had betrayed herself, stung by words that seemed to express the one doubt she could not nerve herself to endure—doubt of her loyalty to me. Before I could speak, she looked up hastily, and began to retract. I stopped her.

"I see—when you had done with it. But, Eveena, why conceal it? Do you think I would not have given this or all the contents of the chest into your hands, and asked no question?"

"Do you mean it? Could you have so trusted, me?"

"My child! is it difficult to trust where I know there is no temptation to wrong? Do you think that to-day I have doubted or suspected you, even while you have accused yourself? I cannot guess at your motive, but I am as sure as ever of your loyalty. Take these things,"—forcing back upon her the phial and the magnets,—“yes, and the test-stone.” . . . She burst into passionate tears.

"I cannot endure this. If I had dreamed your patience would have borne with me half so far, I would never have tried it so, even for your own sake. I meant to be found out and accept the consequences in silence. But you trust me so, that I must tell you what I wanted to conceal. When you kept on the surface it made me so ill"—

"But, Eveena, if the remedy be not worse than the sickness, why not ask for it openly?"

"It was not that. Don't you understand? Of course, I would bear any suffering rather than have done this; but then you would have found me out at once. I wanted to conceal my suffering, not to escape it."

"My child! my child! how could you put us both to all this pain?"

"You know you would not have given me the draught; you would have left the surface at once; and I cannot bear to be always in the way, always hindering your

pleasures, and even your discoveries. You came across a distance that makes a bigger world than this look less than that light, through solitude and dangers and horrors I cannot bear to think of, to see and examine this world of ours. And then you leave things unseen or half-seen, you spoil your work, because a girl is seasick! You ran great risk of death and got badly hurt to see what our hunting was like, and you will not let my head ache that you may find out what our sea-storms and currents are! How can I bear to be such a burden upon you? You trust me, and, I believe," (she added, colouring), "you love me, twelvefold more than I deserve; yet you think me unwilling or unworthy to take ever so small an interest in your work, to bear a few hours' discomfort for it and for you. And yet," she went on passionately, "I may sit trembling and heart-sick for a whole day alone that you may carry out your purpose. I may receive the only real sting your lips have given, because I could not bear that pain without crying. And so with everything. It is not that I must not suffer pain, but that the pain must not come from without. Your lips would punish a fault with words that shame and sting for a day, a summer, a year; your hand must never inflict a sting that may smart for ten minutes. And it is not only that you do this, but you pride yourself on it. Why? It is not that you think the pain of the body so much worse than that of the spirit:—you that smiled at me when you were too badly bruised and torn to stand, yet could scarcely keep back your tears just now, when you thought that I had suffered half an hour of sorrow I did not quite deserve. Why then? Do you think that women feel so diffe-

rently? Have the women of your Earth hearts so much harder and skins so much softer than ours?"

She spoke with most unusual impetuosity, and with that absolute simplicity and sincerity which marked her every look and word, which gave them, for me at least, an unspeakable charm, and for all who heard her a characteristic individuality unlike the speech or manner of any other woman. As soon suspect an infant of elaborate sarcasm as Eveena of affectation, irony, or conscious paradox. Nay, while her voice was in my ears, I never could feel that her views *were* paradoxical. The direct straightforwardness and simple structure of the Martial language enhanced this peculiar effect of her speech; and much that seems infantine in translation was all but eloquent as she spoke it. Often, as on this occasion, I felt guilty of insincerity, of a verbal fencing unworthy of her unalloyed good faith and earnestness, as I endeavoured to parry thrusts that went to the very heart of all those instinctive doctrines which I could the less defend on the moment, because I had never before dreamed that they could be doubted.

"At any rate," I said at last, "your sex gain by my heresy, since they are as richly gifted in stinging words as we in physical force."

"So much the worse for them, surely," she answered simply, "if it be right that men should rule and women obey?"

"That is the received doctrine on Earth," I answered. "In practice, men command and women disobey them; men bully and women lie. But in truth, Eveena, having a wife only too loyal and too loving, I don't care to canvass the deserts of ordinary women or the

discipline of other households. I own that it was wrong to scold you. Do not insist on making me say that it would have been a little less wrong to beat you !”

She laughed—her low, sweet, silvery laugh, the like of which I have hardly heard among Earthly women, even of the simpler, more child-like races of the East and South ; a laugh still stranger in a world where childhood is seldom bright and womanhood mostly sad and fretful. Of the very few satisfactory memories I bore away from that world, the sweetest is the recollection of that laugh, which I heard for the first time on the morrow of our bridals, and for the last time on the day before we parted. I cherish it as evidence that, despite many and bitter troubles, my bride’s short married life was not wholly unhappy. By this time she had found out that we had left the surface, and began to remonstrate.

“ Nay, I have seen all I care to see, my own. I confess the justice of your claim, as the partner of my life, to be the partner of its paramount purpose. You are more precious to me than all the discoveries of which I ever dreamed, and I will not for any purpose whatsoever expose you to real peril or serious pain. But henceforth I will ask you to bear discomfort and inconvenience when the object is worth it, and to help me wherever your help can avail.”

“ I can help you ? ”

“ Much, and in many ways, my Eveena. You will soon learn to understand what I wish to examine and the use of the instruments I employ ; and then you will be the most useful of assistants, as you are the best and most welcome of companions.”

As I spoke a soft colour suffused her face, and her eyes brightened with a joy and contentment such as no promise of pleasure or indulgence could have inspired. To be the partner of adventure and hardship, the drudge in toil and sentinel in peril, was the boon she claimed, the best guerdon I could promise. If but the promise might have been better fulfilled!

It was not till in latitude 9° S. we emerged into the open ocean, and presently found ourselves free from the currents of the narrow waters, that, in order to see the remarkable island of which I had caught sight in my descent, I requested Ergimo to remain for some hours above the surface. The island rises directly out of the sea, and is absolutely unascendible. Balloons, however, render access possible, both to its summit and to its cave-pierced sides. It is the home of enormous flocks of white birds, which resemble in form the heron rather than the eider duck, but which, like the latter, line with down drawn from their own breasts the nests which, counted by millions, occupy every nook and cranny of the crystalline walls, about ten miles in circumference. Each of the nests is nearly as large as that of the stork. They are made of a jelly digested from the bones of the fish upon which the birds prey, and are almost as white in colour as the birds themselves. Freshly formed nest dissolved in hot water makes dishes as much to the taste of Martialists as the famous bird-nest soup to that of the Chinese. Both down and nests, therefore, are largely plundered; but the birds are never injured, and care is taken in robbing them to leave enough of the outer portion of the nest to constitute a bed for the eggs, and encourage the creatures to rebuild and reline it.

One harvest only is permitted, the second stripping of feathers and the rebuilt nest being left undisturbed. The caverns are lined with a white guano, now some feet thick, since it has ceased to be sought for manure; the Martialists having discovered means of saturating the soil with ammonia procured from the nitrogen of the atmosphere, which with the sewage and other similar materials enables them to dispense with this valuable bird manure. Whether the white colour of the island, perceptible even in a large Terrestrial telescope, is in any degree due to the whiteness of the birds, their nests, and leavings, or wholly to reflection from the bright spar-like surface of the rock itself, and especially of the flat table-like summit, I will not pretend to say.

From this point we held our course south-westward, and entered the northernmost of two extraordinary gulfs of exactly similar shape, separated by an isthmus and peninsula which assume on a map the form of a gigantic hammer. The strait by which each gulf is entered is about a hundred miles in length and ten in breadth. The gulf itself, if it should not rather be called an inland sea, occupies a total area of about 100,000 square miles. The isthmus, 500 miles in length by 50 in breadth, ends in a roughly square peninsula of about 10,000 square miles in extent, nearly the whole of which is a plateau 2000 feet above the sea-level. On the narrowest point of the isthmus, just where it joins the mainland, and where a sheltered bay runs up from either sea, is situated the great city of Amâkasfe, the natural centre of Martial life and commerce. At this point we found awaiting us the balloon which was to convey us to the Court of the Suzerain. A very light but strong metallic framework

maintained the form of the "fish-shaped" or spindle-shaped balloon itself, which closely resembled that of our vessel, its dimensions being of necessity greater. Attached to this framework was the car of similar form, about twelve feet in length and six in depth, the upper third of the sides, however, being of open-work, so as not to interfere with the survey of the traveller. Eveena could not help shivering at the sight of the slight vehicle and the enormous machine of thin, bladder-like material by which it was to be upheld. She embarked, indeed, without a word, her alarm betraying itself by no voluntary sign, unless it were the tight clasp of my hand, resembling that of a child frightened, but ashamed to confess its fear. I noticed, however, that she so arranged her veil as to cover her eyes when the signal for the start was given. She was, therefore, wholly unconscious of the sudden spring, unattended by the slightest jolt or shake, which raised us at once 500 feet above the coast, and under whose influence, to my eyes, the ground appeared suddenly to fall from us. When I drew out the folds of her veil, it was with no little amazement that she saw the sky around her, the sea and the city far below. An aerial current to the north-westward at our present level, which had been selected on that account, carried us at a rate of some twelve miles an hour; a rate much increased, however, by the sails at the stern of the car, sails of thin metal fixed on strong frames, and striking with a screw-like motion. Their lack of expanse was compensated by a rapidity of motion such that they seemed to the eye not to move at all, presenting the appearance of an uniform disc reflecting the rays of the Sun, which was now almost

immediately above us. Towards evening the Residence of the Camptâ became visible on the north-western horizon. It was built on a plateau about 400 feet above the sea-level, towards which the ground from all sides sloped up almost imperceptibly. Around it was a garden of great extent with a number of trees of every sort, some of them masses of the darkest green, others of bright yellow, contrasting similarly shaped masses of almost equal size clothed from base to top in a continuous sheet of pink, emerald, white or crimson flowers. The turf presented almost as great a variety of colours, arranged in every conceivable pattern, above which rose innumerable flower-beds, uniform or varied, the smallest perhaps two, the largest more than 200 feet in diameter; each circle of bloom higher than that outside it, till in some cases the centre rose even ten feet above the general level. The building itself was low, having nowhere more than two stories. One wing, pointed out to me by Ergimo, was appropriated to the household of the Prince; the centre standing out in front and rear, divided by a court almost as wide as the wings; the further wing accommodating the attendants and officials of the Court. We landed, just before the evening mist began to gather, at the foot of an inclined way of a concrete resembling jasper, leading up to the main entrance of the Palace.

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CHAPTER XVII.

PRESENTED AT COURT.

LEADING Eveena by the hand—for to hold my arm after the European fashion was always an inconvenience and fatigue to her—and preceded by Ergimo, I walked unnoticed to the closed gate of pink crystal, contrasting the emerald green of the outer walls. Along the front of this central portion of the residence was a species of verandah, supported by pillars overlaid with a bright red metal, and wrought in the form of smooth tree trunks closely clasped by creepers, the silver flowers of the latter contrasting the dense golden foliage and ruby-like stems. Under this, and in front of the gate itself, were two sentries armed with a spear, the shaft of which was about six feet in length, hollow, and almost as light as the cane or reed handle of an African assegai. The blade more resembled the triangular bayonet. Beside each, however, was the terrible asphyxiator, fixed on its stand, with a bore about as great as that of a nine-pounder, but incomparably lighter. These two weapons might at one discharge have annihilated a huge mob of insurgents threatening to storm the palace, were insurrections known in Mars. These men saluted us by dropping the points of their weapons and inclining the handle towards us; gazing

upon me with surprise, and with something of soldierly admiration for physical superiority. The doors, wide enough to admit a dozen Martialists abreast, parted, and we entered a vaulted hall whose arched roof was supported not by pillars but by gigantic statues, each presenting the lustre of a different jewel, and all wrought with singular perfection of proportion and of beauty. Here we were met by two officers wearing the same dress as the sentries outside—a diaper of crimson and silver. The rank of those who now received us, however, was indicated by a silver ribbon passing over the left shoulder, and supporting what I should have called a staff, save that it was of metal and had a sharp point, rendering it almost as formidable a weapon as the rapier. Exchanging a word or two with Ergimo, these gentlemen ushered us into a small room on the right, where refreshments were placed before us. Eveena whispered me that she must not share our meal in presence of these strangers; an intimation which somewhat blunted the keen appetite I always derived from a journey through the Martial atmosphere. Checked as it was, however, that appetite seemed a new astonishment to our attendants; the need of food among their race being proportionate to their inferior size and strength. When we rose, I asked Ergimo what was to become of Eveena, as the officers were evidently waiting to conduct me into the presence of their Sovereign, where it would not be appropriate for her to appear. He repeated my question to the principal official, and the latter, walking to a door in the farther corner of the room, sounded an electric signal; a few seconds after which the door opened, showing two

veiled figures, the pink ground of whose robes indicated their matronhood, if I may apply such a term to the relation of his hundred temporary wives to the Campâtâ. But this ground colour was almost hidden in the embroidery of crimson, gold, and white, which, as I soon found, were the favourite colours of the reigning Prince. To these ladies I resigned Eveena, the officer saying, as I somewhat reluctantly parted from her, "What you entrust to the Campâtâ's household you will find again in your own when your audience is over." Whether this avoidance of all direct mention of women were matter of delicacy or contempt I hardly knew, though I had observed it on former occasions.

When the door closed, I noticed that Ergimo had left us, and the officers indicated by gesture rather than by words that they were to lead me immediately into the presence. I had considered with some care how I was, on so critical an occasion, to conduct myself, and had resolved that the most politic course would probably be an assumption of courteous but absolute independence; to treat the Autocrat of this planet much as an English envoy would treat an Indian Prince. It was in accordance with this intention that I had assumed a dress somewhat more elaborate than is usually worn here, a white suit of a substance resembling velvet in texture, and moiré in lustre, with collar and belt of silver. On my breast I wore my order of [illegible], and in my belt my one cherished Terrestrial possession—the sword, reputed the best in Asia, that had twice driven its point home within a finger's breadth of my life; and that clove the turban on my brow but a minute before it was sur-

rendered—just in time to save its gallant owner and his score of surviving comrades. In its hilt I had set the emerald with which alone the Commander of the Faithful rewarded my services. The turban is not so unlike the masculine head-dress of Mars as to attract any special attention. Re-entering the hall, I was conducted along a gallery and through another crystal door into the immediate presence of the Autocrat. The audience chamber was of no extraordinary size, perhaps one-quarter as large as the peristyle of Esmo's dwelling. Along the emerald walls ran a series of friezes wrought in gold, representing various scenes of peace and war, agricultural, judicial, and political; as well as incidents which, I afterwards learnt, preserved the memory of the long struggles wherein the Communists were finally overthrown. The lower half of the room was empty, the upper was occupied by a semicircle of seats forming part of the building itself and directly facing the entrance. These took up about one-third of the space, the central floor being divided from the upper portion of the room by a low wall of metal surmounted by arches supporting the roof and hung with drapery, which might be so lowered as to conceal the whole occupied part of the chamber. The seats rose in five tiers, one above the other. The semicircle, however, was broken exactly in the middle, that is, at the point farthest from the entrance, by a broad flight of steps, at the summit of which, and raised a very little above the seats of the highest tier, was the throne, supported by two of the royal brutes whose attack had been so nearly fatal to myself, wrought in silver, their erect heads forming the arms and front. About fifty persons

were present, occupying only the seats nearest to the throne. On the upper tier were nine or ten who wore a scarlet sash, among whom I recognised a face I had not seen since the day of my memorable visit to the Astronaut; not precisely the face of a friend—Endo Zamptâ. Behind the throne were ranged a dozen guards, armed with the spear and with the lightning gun used in hunting. That a single Martial battalion with its appropriate artillery could annihilate the best army of the Earth I could not but be aware; yet the first thought that occurred to me, as I looked on these formidably armed but diminutive soldiers, was that a score of my Arab horsemen would have cut a regiment of them to pieces. But by the time I had reached the foot of the steps my attention was concentrated on a single figure and face—the form and countenance of the Prince, who rose from his throne as I approached. Those who remember that Louis XIV., a prince reputed to have possessed the most majestic and awe-inspiring presence of his age, was actually beneath the ordinary height of Frenchmen, may be able to believe me when I say that the Autocrat of Mars, though scarcely five feet tall, was in outward appearance and bearing the most truly royal and imposing prince I have ever seen. His stature, rising nearly two inches over the tallest of those around him, perhaps added to the effect of a mien remarkable for dignity, composure, and self-confidence. The predominant and most immediately observable expression of his face was one of serene calm and command. A closer inspection and a longer experience explained why, notwithstanding, my first conception of his character (and it was a true one)

ascribed to him quite as much of fire and spirit as of impassive grandeur. His voice, though its tone was gentle and almost strikingly quiet, had in it something of the ring peculiar to those which have sent the word of command along a line of battle. I felt as I heard it more impressed with the personal greatness, and even with the rank and power, of the Prince before me, than when I knelt to kiss the hand of the Most Christian King, or stood barefooted before the greatest modern successor of the conqueror of Stamboul.

"I am glad to receive you," he said. "It will be among the most memorable incidents of my reign that I welcome to my Court the first visitor from another world, or," he added, after a sudden pause, and with an inflection of unmistakable irony in his tone, "the first who has descended to our world from a height to which no balloon could reach and at which no balloonist could live."

"I am honoured, Prince," I replied, "in the notice of a greater potentate than the greatest of my own world."

These compliments exchanged, the Prince at once proceeded to more practical matters, aptly, however, connecting his next sentence with the formal phrases preceding it.

"Nevertheless, you have not shown excessive respect for my power in the person of one of my greatest officers. If you treated the princes of Earth as unceremoniously as the Regent of Elcavoo, I can understand that you found it convenient to place yourself beyond their reach."

I thought that this speech afforded me an opportunity

of repairing my offence with the least possible loss of dignity.

"The proudest of Earthly princes," I replied, "would, I think, have pardoned the roughness which forgot the duty of a subject in the first obligations of humanity. No Sovereign whom I have served, but would have forgiven me more readily for rough words spoken at such a moment, than for any delay or slackness in saving the life of a woman in danger under his own eyes. Permit me to take this opportunity of apologising to the Regent in your presence, and assuring him that I was influenced by no disrespect to him, but only by overpowering terror for another."

"The lives of a dozen women," said the Campât, still with that covert irony or sarcasm in his tone, "would seem of less moment than threats and actual violence offered to the ruler of our largest and wealthiest dominion. The excuse which Endo Zamptâ must accept" (with a slight but perceptible emphasis on the imperative) "is the utter difference between our laws and ideas and your own."

The Regent, at this speech from his Sovereign, rose and made the usual gesture of assent, inclining his head and lifting his left hand to his mouth. But the look on his face as he turned it on me, thus partly concealing it from the Campât, boded no good should I ever fall into his power. The Prince then desired me to give an account of the motives which had induced my voyage and the adventures I had encountered. In reply, I gave him, as briefly and clearly as I could, a summary of all that is recorded in the earlier part of this narrative, carefully forbearing to afford any explana-

tion of the manner in which the apergic force was generated. This omission the Prince noticed at once with remarkable quickness.

"You do not choose," he said, "to tell us your secret, and of course it is your property. Hereafter, however, I shall hope to purchase it from you."

"Prince," I answered, "if one of your subjects found himself in the power of a race capable of conquering this world and destroying its inhabitants, would you forgive him if he furnished them with the means of reaching you?"

"I think," he replied, "my forgiveness would be of little consequence in that case. But go on with your story."

I finished my narration among looks of surprise and incredulity from no inconsiderable part of the audience, which, however, I noticed the less because the Prince himself listened with profound interest; putting in now and then a question which indicated his perfect comprehension of my account, of the conditions of such a journey and of the means I had employed to meet them.

"Before you were admitted," he said, "Endo Zamptâ had read to us his report upon your vessel and her machinery, an account which in every respect consists with and supports the truth of your relation. Indeed, were your story untrue, you have run a greater risk in telling it here than in the most daring adventure I have ever known or imagined. The Court is dismissed. Reclamomorta will please me by remaining with me for the present."

When the assembly dispersed, I followed their Auto-

crat at his desire into his private apartments, where, resting among a pile of cushions and motioning me to take a place in immediate proximity to himself, he continued the conversation in a tone and manner so exactly the same as that he had employed in public as to show that the latter was not assumed for purposes of monarchical stage-play, but was the natural expression of his own character as developed under the influence of unlimited and uncontradicted power. He only exchanged, for unaffected interest and implied confidence, the tone of ironical doubt by which he had rendered it out of the question for his courtiers to charge him with a belief in that which public opinion might pronounce impossible, while making it apparent to me that he regarded the bigotry of scepticism with scarcely veiled contempt.

"I wish," he said, "I had half-a-dozen subjects capable of imagining such an enterprise and hardy enough to undertake it. But though we all profess to consider knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, the one object for which it is worth while to live, none of us would risk his life in such an adventure for all the rewards that science and fame could give."

"I think, Prince," I replied, "that I am in presence of one inhabitant of this planet who would have dared at least as much as I have done."

"Possibly," he said. "Because, weary as most of us profess to be of existence, the weariest life in this world is that of him who rules it; living for ever under the silent criticism which he cannot answer, and bound to devote his time and thoughts to the welfare of a race whose utter extermination would be, on their own show-

ing, the greatest boon he could confer upon them. Certainly I would rather be the discoverer of a world than its Sovereign."

He asked me numerous questions about the Earth, the races that inhabit it, their several systems of government, and their relations to one another; manifesting a keener interest, I thought, in the great wars which ended while I was yet a youth, than in any other subject. At last he permitted me to take leave. "You are," he said, "the most welcome guest I ever have or could have received; a guest distinguished above all others by a power independent of my own. But what honour I can pay to courage and enterprise, what welcome I can give such a guest, shall not be unworthy of him or of myself. Retire now to the home you will find prepared for you. I will only ask you to remember that I have chosen one near my own in order that I may see you often, and learn in private all that you can tell me."

At the entrance of the apartment I was met by the officer who had introduced me into the presence, and conducted at once to a door opening on the interior court or peristyle of the central portion of the Palace. This was itself a garden, but, unlike those of private houses, a garden open to the sky and traversed by roads in lieu of mere paths; not serving, as in private dwellings, the purposes of a common living room. Here a carriage awaited us, and my escort requested me to mount. I had some misgivings on Eveena's account, but felt it necessary to imitate the reserve and affected indifference on such subjects of those among whom I had been thrown, at least until I somewhat better under-

stood their ways, and had established my own position. Traversing a vaulted passage underneath the rearward portion of the Palace, we emerged into the outer garden, and through this into a road lighted with a brilliancy almost equal to that of day. Our journey occupied nearly half an hour, when we entered an enclosure apparently of great size, the avenue of which was so wide that, without dismounting, our carriage passed directly up to the door of a larger house than I had yet seen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PRINCE'S PRESENT.

"THIS," said my escort, as we dismounted, "is the residence assigned to you by the Camptâ. Besides the grounds here enclosed, he has awarded you, by a deed which will presently be placed in your hands, an estate of some ten *stoltau*, which you can inspect at your leisure, and which will afford you a revenue as large as is enjoyed by any save by the twelve Regents. He has endeavoured to add to this testimony of his regard by rendering your household as complete as wealth and forethought could make it. What may be wanting to your own tastes and habits you will find no difficulty in adding."

We now entered that first and principal chamber of the mansion wherein it is customary to receive all visitors and transact all business. The hall was one of unusual size and magnificence. Here, at a table not far from the entrance, stood another official, not wearing the uniform of the Court, with several documents in his hand. As he turned to salute me, his face wore an expression of annoyance and discomfiture which not a little surprised me, till, by following his sidelong, uncomfortable glances, I perceived a veiled feminine figure,

which could be no other than Eveena's. Misreading my surprise, the official said—

"It is no fault of mine, and I have not spoken except to remonstrate, as far as might be allowed, against so unusual a proceeding."

He must have been astonished and annoyed indeed to take such notice of a stranger's wife; and, above all, to take upon himself to comment on her conduct for good or ill. I thought it best to make no reply, and simply saluted him in form as I received the first paper handed to me, to which, by the absence of any blank space, I perceived that my signature was not required. This was indeed the document which bestowed on me the house and estate presented by the Sovereign. The next paper handed to me appeared to resemble the marriage-contract I had already signed, save that but one blank was left therein. Unable to decipher it, I was about to ask the official to read it aloud, when Eveena, who had stolen up to me unperceived, caught my arm and drew me a little way aside, indifferent to the wondering glances of the officials; who had probably never seen a woman venture uncalled into the public apartments of her husband's house, still less interpose in any matter of business, and no doubt thought that she was taking outrageous advantage of my ignorance and inexperience.

"I will scold you presently, child," I said quickly and low. "What is it?"

"Sign at once," she whispered, "and ask no questions. Deal with me as you will afterwards. You must take what is given you now, without comment or objection, simply expressing your thanks."

"*Must!* Eveena?"

"It is not safe to refuse or slight gifts from such a quarter," she answered, in the same low tone. "Trust me so far; please do what I entreat of you now. I must bear your displeasure if I fail to satisfy you when we are alone."

Her manner was so agitated and so anxious that it recalled to me at once the advice of Esmo upon the same point, though the fears which had prompted so strange an intervention were wholly incomprehensible to me. I knew her, however, by this time too well to refuse the trust she now for the first time claimed, and taking the documents one by one as if I had perfectly understood them, I wrote my name in the space left blank for it, and allowed the official to stamp the slips without a word. I then expressed briefly but earnestly my thanks both to the Autocrat and to the officials who had been the agents of his kindness. They retired, and I looked round for Eveena; but as soon as she saw that I was about to comply with her request, she had quitted the room. Alone in my own house, knowing nothing of its geography, having no notion how to summon the brute domestics—if, indeed, the dwelling were furnished with those useful creatures, without whom a Martial household would be signally incomplete—I could only look for the spring that opened the principal door. This should lead into the gallery which, as I judged, must divide the hall and the front apartments from those looking into the peristyle. Having found and pressed this spring, the door opened on a gallery longer, wider, and more elaborately ornamented than that of the only Martial mansions into

which I had been hitherto admitted. Looking round in no little perplexity, I observed a niche in which stood a statue of white relieved by a scarlet background; and beside this statue, crouching and half hidden, a slight pink object, looking at first like a bundle of drapery, but which in a moment sprang up, and, catching my hand, made me aware that Eveena had been waiting for me.

"I beg you," she said with an earnestness I could not understand, "I beg you to come *this way*," leading me to the right, for I had turned instinctively to the left in entering the gallery, perhaps because my room in Esmo's house had lain in that direction. Reaching the end of the gallery, she turned into one of the inner apartments; and as the door closed behind us, I felt that she was sinking to the ground, as if the agitation she had manifested in the hall, controlled till her object was accomplished, had now overpowered her. I caught and carried her to the usual pile of cushions in the corner. The room, according to universal custom in Martial houses after sunset, was brilliantly lighted by the electric lamp in the peristyle, and throwing back her veil, I saw that she was pale to ghastliness and almost fainting. In my ignorance of my own house, I could call for no help, and employ no other restoratives than fond words and caresses. Under this treatment, nevertheless, she recovered perhaps as quickly as under any which the faculty might have prescribed. She was still, however, much more distressed than mere consciousness of the grave solecism she had committed could explain. But I had no other clue to her trouble,

and could only hope that in repudiating this she would explain its real cause.

"Come, *bambina*!" I expostulated, "we understand one another too well by this time for you to wrong me by all this alarm. I know that you would not have broken through the customs of your people without good reason; and you know that, even if your reason were not sufficient, I should not be hard upon the error."

"I am sure you would not," she said. "But this time you have to consider others, and you cannot let it be supposed that you do not know a wife's duty, or will allow your authority to be set at naught in your own household."

"What matter? Do you suppose I listen in the roads?" [care for gossip], I rejoined. "Household rule is a matter of the veil, and no one—not even your autocratic Prince—will venture to lift it."

"You have not lifted it yourself yet," she answered. "You will understand me, when you have looked at the slips you were about to make them read aloud, had I not interrupted you."

"Read them yourself," I said, handing to her the papers I still held, and which, after her interposition, I had not attempted to decipher. She took them, but with a visible shudder of reluctance—not stronger than came over me before she had read three lines aloud. Had I known their purport, I doubt whether even Eveena's persuasion and the Autocrat's power together could have induced me to sign them. They were in very truth contracts of marriage—if marriage it can be called. The Sovereign had done me the unusual, but

not wholly unprecedented, favour of selecting half a dozen of the fairest maidens of those waiting their fate in the Nurseries of his empire; had proffered on my behalf terms which satisfied their ambition, gratified their vanity, and would have induced them to accept any suitor so recommended, without the insignificant formality of a personal courtship. It had seemed to him only a gracious attention to complete my household; and he had furnished me with a bevy of wives, as I presently found he had selected a complete set of the most intelligent *ambau*, *carvee*, and *tyree* which he could procure. Without either the one or the other, the dwelling he had given me would have seemed equally empty or incomplete.

This mark of royal favour astounded and dismayed me more than Eveena herself. If she had entertained the wish, she would hardly have acknowledged to herself the hope, that she might remain permanently the sole partner of my home. But so sudden, speedy, and wholesale an intrusion thereon she certainly had not expected. Even in Mars, a first bride generally enjoys for some time a monopoly of her husband's society, if she cannot be said to enchain his affection. It was hard, indeed, before the thirtieth day after her marriage, to find herself but one in a numerous family—the harder that our union had from the first been close, intimate, unrestrainedly confidential, as it can hardly be where neither expects that the tie can remain exclusive; and because she had learned to realise and rest upon such love as belongs to a life in which woman, never affecting the independence of coequal partnership, has never yet sunk by reaction into a mere slave and

toy. It was hard, cruelly hard, on one who had given in the first hour of marriage, and never failed to give, a love whose devotion had no limit, no reserve or qualification; a submission that was less self-sacrifice or self-suppression than the absolute surrender of self—of will, feeling, and self-interest—to the judgment and pleasure of him she loved: hard on her who had neither thought nor care for herself as apart from me.

When I understood to what I had actually committed myself, I snatched the papers from her, and might have torn them to pieces but for the gentle restraining hand she laid upon mine.

"You cannot help it," she said, the tears falling from her eyes, but with a self-command of which I could not have supposed her capable. "It seems hard on me; but it is better so. It is not that you are not content with me, not that you love me less. I can bear it better when it comes from a stranger, and is forced upon you without, and even, I think, against your will."

The pressure of the arm that clasped her waist, and the hand that held her own, was a sufficient answer to any doubt that might be implied in her last words; and, lifting her eyes to mine, she said—

"I shall always remember this. I shall always think that you were sorry not to have at least a little while longer alone with me. It is selfish to feel glad that you are pained; but your sympathy, your sharing my own feeling, comforts me as I never could have been comforted when, as must have happened sooner or later, you had found for yourself another companion."

"Child, do you mean to say there is 'no portal to this passage;' and that, however much against my will, I

am bound to women I have never seen, and never wish to see?"

"You have signed," replied Eveena gently. "The contracts are stamped, and are in the official's hands; and you could not attempt to break them without giving mortal offence to the Prince, who has intended you a signal favour. Besides, these girls themselves have done no wrong, and deserve no affront or unkindness from you."

I was silent for some minutes; at first simply astounded at the calm magnanimity which was mingled with her perfect simplicity, then, pondering the possibilities of the situation—

"Can we not escape?" I said at last, rather to myself than to her.

"Escape!" she repeated with surprise. "And from what? The favour shown you by our Sovereign, the wealth he has bestowed, the personal interest he has taken in perfecting every detail of one of the most splendid homes ever given save to a prince—every incident of your position—make you the most envied man in this world; and you would escape from them?"

Gazing for a few moments in my face, she added—

"These maidens were chosen as the loveliest in all the Nurseries of two continents; every one of them far more beautiful than I can be, even in your eyes. Pray do not, for my sake, be unkind to them or try to dislike them. What is it you would escape?"

"Being false to you," I answered, "if nothing else."

"False!" she echoed, in unaffected wonder. "What did you promise me?"

Again I was silenced by the loyal simplicity with

which she followed out ideas so strange to me that their consequences, however logical, I could never anticipate; and could hardly admit to be sound, even when so directly and distinctly deduced as now from the intolerable consistency of the premises.

"But," I answered at last, "how much did *you* promise, Eveena? and how much more have you given?"

"Nothing," she replied, "that I did not owe. You won your right to all the love I could give before you asked for it, and since."

"We 'drive along opposite lines,' Madonna; but we would both give and risk much to avoid what is before us. Let me ask your father whether it be not yet possible to return to my vessel, and leave a world so uncongenial to both of us."

"You cannot!" she answered. "Try to escape—you insult the Prince; you put yourself and me, for whom you fear more, in the power of a malignant enemy. You cannot guide a balloon or a vessel, if you could get possession of one; and within a few hours after your departure was known, every road and every port would be closed to you."

"Can I not send to your father?" I said.

"Probably," she replied. "I think we shall find a telegraph in your office, if you will allow me to enter there, now there is no one to see; and it must be morning in Ecasfe."

Familiar with the construction and arrangement of a Martial house, Eveena immediately crossed the gallery to what she called the office—the front room on the right, where the head of the house carries on his work or study. Here, above a desk attached to the wall,

was one of those instruments whose manipulation was simple enough for a novice like myself.

"But," I said, "I cannot write your stylistic characters; and if I used the phonic letters, a message from me would be very likely to excite the curiosity of officials who would care about no other."

"May I," she suggested, "write your message for you, and put your purport in words that will be understood by my father alone?"

"Do," I rejoined, "but do it in my name, and I will sign it."

Under her direction, I took the stylus or pencil and the slip of *tafroo* she offered me, and wrote my name at the head. After eliciting the exact purport of the message I desired to send, and meditating for some moments, she wrote and read out to me words literally translated as follows:—

"The rich aviary my flower-bird thought over full. I would breathe home [air]. Health-speak." The sense of which, as I could already understand, was—

"A splendid mansion has been given us, but my flower-bird has found it too full. I wish for my native air. Prescribe."

The brevity of the message was very characteristic of the language. Equally characteristic of the stylography was the fact that the words occupied about an inch beyond the address. Following her pencil as she pointed to the ciphers, I said—

"Is not *asny caré* a false concord? And why have you used the past tense?"

This ill-timed pedantry, applying to Martial grammar the rules of that with which my boyhood had been

painfully familiarised, provoked, amid all our trouble, Eveena's low silver-toned laugh.

"I meant it," she answered. "My father will look at his pupil's writing with both eyes."

"Well, you are out of reach even of the leveloo."

She laughed again.

"Asnyca-re," she said; the changed accentuation turning the former words into the well-remembered name of my landing-place, with the interrogative syllable annexed.

This message despatched, we could only await the reply. Nestling among the cushions at my knee, her head resting on my breast, Eveena said—

"And now, forgive my presumption in counselling you, and my reminding you of what is painful to both. But what to us is as the course of the clock, is strange as the stars to you. You must see—*them*, and must order all household arrangements; and" (glancing at a dial fixed in the wall) "the black is driving down the green."

"So much the better," I said. "I shall have less time to speak to them, and less chance of speaking or looking my mind. And as to arrangements, those, of course, you must make."

"I! forgive me," she answered, "that is impossible. It is for you to assign to each of us her part in the household, her chamber, her rank and duties. You forget that I hold exactly the same position with the youngest among them, and cannot presume even to suggest, much less to direct."

I was silent, and after a pause she went on—

"It is not for me to advise you; but"—

"Speak your thought, now and always, Eveena. Even if I did not stand in so much need of your guidance in a new world, I never yet refused to hear counsel; and it is a wife's right to offer it."

"Is it? We are not so taught," she answered. "I am afraid you have rougher ground to steer over than you are aware. Alone with you, I hope I should have done my best, remembering the lesson of the leveloo, never to give you the pain of teaching a different one. But we shall no longer be alone; and you cannot hope to manage seven as you might manage one. Moreover, these girls have neither had that first experience of your nature which made that lesson so impressive to me, nor the kindly and gentle training, under a mother's care and a father's mild authority, that I had enjoyed. They would not understand the control that is not enforced. They will obey when they must; and will feel that they must obey when they cannot deceive, and dare not rebel. Do not think hardly of them for this. They have known no life but that of the strict clockwork routine of a great Nursery, where no personal affection and no rule but that of force is possible."

"I understand, Madonna. Your Prince's gift puts a man in charge of young ladies, hitherto brought up among women only, and, of course, petty, petulant, frivolous, as women left to themselves ever are! I wish you could see the ridiculous side of the matter which occurs to me, as I see the painful aspect which alone is plain to you. I can scarcely help laughing at the chance which has assigned to me the daily personal management of half-a-dozen school-girls; and school-girls who must also be wives! I don't think you need

fear that I shall deal with them as with you: as a man of sense and feeling must deal with a woman whose own instincts, affection, and judgment are sufficient for her guidance. I never saw much of girls or children. I remember no home but the Western school and the Oriental camp. I never, as soldier or envoy, was acquainted with other men's homes. While still beardless, I have ruled bearded soldiers by a discipline whose sanctions were the death-shot and the bastinado; and when I left the camp and court, it was for colleges where a beardless face is never seen. I must look to you to teach me how discipline may be softened to suit feminine softness, and what milder sanction may replace the noose and the stick of the *ferash*" (Persian executioner).

"I cannot believe," Eveena answered, taking me, as usual, to the letter, "that you will ever draw the zone too tight. We say that 'anarchy is the worst tyranny.' Laxity which leaves us to quarrel and torment each other, tenderness which encourages disorder and disobedience till they must be put down perforce, is ultimate unkindness. I will not tell you that such indulgence will give you endless trouble, win you neither love nor respect, and probably teach its objects to laugh at you under the veil. You will care more for this—that you would find yourself forced at last to change 'velvet hand for leathern band.' Believe me, my—our comfort and happiness must depend on your grasping the helm at once and firmly; ruling us, and ruling with a strong hand. Otherwise your home will resemble the most miserable of all scenes of discomfort—an ungoverned school; and the most severe

and arbitrary household rule is better by far than that. And—forgive me once more—but do not speak as if you would deal one measure with the left hand and another with the right. Surely you do not so misunderstand me as to think I counselled you to treat myself differently from others? ‘Just rule only can be gentle.’ If you show favouritism at first, you will find yourself driven step by step to do what you will feel to be cruel; what will pain yourself perhaps more than any one else. You may make envy and dislike bite (hold) their tongues, but you cannot prevent their stinging under the veil. Therefore, once more, you cannot let my interference pass as if none but you knew of it.”

“Madonna, if I *am* to rule such a household, I will rule as absolutely as your autocratic Prince. I will tolerate no criticism and no questions.”

“You surely forget,” she urged, “that they know my offence, and do not know—must not know—what in your judgment excuses it. Let them once learn that it is possible so to force the springs [bolts] without a sting, it will take a salt-fountain [of tears] to blot the lesson from their memory.”

“What would you have, Eveena? Am I to deal unjustly that I may seem just? That course steers straight to disaster. And, had you been in fault, could I humble you in other eyes?”

“If I feel hurt by any mark of your displeasure, or humbled that it should be known to my equals in your own household,” she replied, “it is time I were deprived of the privileges that have rendered me so overweening.”

My answer was intercepted by the sound of an electric

bell or miniature gong, and a slip of tafroo fell upon the desk. The first words were in that vocal character which I had mastered, and came from Esmo.

"Hysterical folly," he had said. "Mountain air might be fatal; and clear nights are dangerously cold for more than yourselves."

"What does he mean?" I asked, as I read out a formula more studiously occult than those of the Pharmacopœia.

"That I am unpardonably silly, and that you must not dream of going back to your vessel. The last words, I suppose, warn you how carefully in such a household you need to guard the secrets of the Starlight."

"Well, and what is this in the stylic writing?"

Eveena glanced over it and coloured painfully, the tears gathering in her eyes.

"That," she said, pointing to the first cipher, "is my mother's signature."

"Then," I said, "it is meant for you, not for me."

"Nay," she answered. "Do you think I could take advantage of your not knowing the character?"—and she read words quite as incomprehensible to me as the writing itself.

"Can a star mislead the blind? I should veil myself in crimson if I have trained a bird to snatch sugar from full hands. Must even *your* womanhood reverse the clasps of your childhood?"

"It chimes midnight twice," I said—a Martial phrase meaning, 'I am as much in the dark as ever.' "Do not translate it, carissima. I can read in your face that it is unjust—reproachful where you deserve no reproach."

"Nay, when you so wrong my mother I must tell you

exactly what she means :—‘ Can a child of the Star take advantage of one who relies on her to explain the customs of a world unknown to him ? I blush to think that my child can abuse the tenderness of one who is too eager to indulge her fancies.’

“ You see she is quite right. You do trust me so absolutely, you are so strangely over-kind to me, it is shameful I should vex you by fretting because you are forced to do what you might well have done at your own pleasure.”

“ My own, I was more than vexed ; chiefly perhaps for your sake, but not by you. Where any other woman would have stung the sore by sending fresh sparks along the wire, you thought only to spare me the pain of seeing you pained. But what do the last words mean ? No” —for I saw the colour deepen on her half-averted face —“ better leave unread what we know to be written in error.”

But the less agreeable a supposed duty, the more resolute was Eveena to fulfil it.

“ They were meant to recall a saying familiar in every school and household,” she said :—

“ ‘ Sandal loosed and well-clasped zone—
Childhood spares the woman grown.
Change the clasps, and woman yet
Pays with interest childhood’s debt.’ ”

“ This”—tightening and relaxing the clasp of her zone—
“ is the symbol of stricter or more indulgent household rule.” Then bending so as to avert her face, she unclasped her embroidered sandal and gave it into my hand ;—“ and this is what, I suppose, you would call its sanction.”

“ There is more to be said for the sandal than I sup-

posed, bambina, if it have helped to make you what you are. But you may tell Zulve that its work and hers are done."

Kneeling before her, I kissed, with more studied reverence than the sacred stone of the Caaba, the tiny foot on which I replaced its covering.

"Baby as she thinks and I call you, Eveena, you are fast unteaching me the lesson which, before you were born and ever since, the women of the Earth have done their utmost to impress indelibly upon my mind—the lesson that woman is but a less lovable, more petulant, more deeply and incurably spoilt child. Your mother's reproach is an exact inversion of the truth. No one could have acted with more utter unselfishness, more devoted kindness, more exquisite delicacy than you have shown in this miserable matter. I could not have believed that even you could have put aside your own feelings so completely, could have recognised so promptly that I was not in fault, have thought so exclusively of what was best and safe for me in the first place, and next of what was kind and just and generous to your rivals. I never thought such reasonableness and justice possible to feminine nature; and if I cannot love you more dearly, you have taught me how deeply to admire and honour you. I accept the situation, since you will have it so; be as just and considerate henceforward as you have been to-night, and trust me that it shall bring no shadow between us—shall never make you less to me than you are now."

"But it must," she insisted. "I cannot now be other than one wife among many; and what place I hold among them is, remember, for you and you alone to

fix. No rule, no custom, obliges you to give any preference in form or fact to one, merely because you chanced to marry her first."

"Such, nevertheless, did not seem to be the practice in your father's house. Your mother was as distinctly wife and mistress as if his sole companion."

"My father," she replied, "did not marry a second time till within my own memory; and it was natural and usual to give the first place to one so much older and more experienced. I have no such claim, and when you see my companions you may find good reason to think that I am the least fit of all to take the first place. Nor," she added, drawing me from the room, "do I wish it. If only you will keep in your mind one little place for the memory of our visit to your vessel and your promise respecting it, I shall be more than content."

Eveena's humble, unconscious self-abnegation was rendering the conversation intolerably painful, and even the embarrassing situation now at hand was a welcome interruption. Eveena paused before a door opening from the gallery into one of the rooms looking on the peristyle.

"You will find them there," she said, drawing back.

"Come with me, then," I answered; and as she shrank away, I tightened my clasp of her waist and drew her forward. The door opened, and we found ourselves in presence of six veiled ladies in pink and silver, all of them, with one exception, a little taller and less slight than my bride. Eveena, with the kindness which never failed under the most painful trial or the most powerful impulses of natural feeling, extricated herself gently from my hold, took the hand of the first, and

brought her up to me. The girl was evidently startled at the first sight of her new possessor, and alarmed by a figure so much larger and more powerful than any she had ever seen, exceeding probably the picture drawn by her imagination.

"This," said Eveena gently and gravely, "is Eunané, the prettiest and most accomplished scholar in her Nursery."

As I was about to acknowledge the introduction with the same cold politeness with which I should have bowed to a strange guest on Earth, Eveena took my left hand in her own and laid it on the maiden's veil, recalling to me at once the proprieties of the occasion and the justice she had claimed for her unoffending and unintentional rivals; but at the same time bringing back in full force a remembrance she could not have forgotten, but whose effect upon myself the ideas to which she was habituated rendered her unable to anticipate. To accept in her presence a second bride, by the same ceremonial act which had so lately asserted my claim to herself, was intensely repugnant to my feelings, and only her own self-sacrificing influence could have overcome my reluctance. My hesitation was, I fear, perceptible to Eunané; for, as I removed her veil and head-dress, her expression and a colour somewhat brighter than that of mere maiden shyness indicated disappointment or mortified pride. She was certainly very beautiful, and perhaps, had I now seen them both for the first time, I might have acquiesced in the truth of Eveena's self-depreciation. As it was, nothing could associate with the bright intelligent face, the clear grey eyes and light brown hair, the lithe active form instinct with nervous

energy, that charm which from our first acquaintance their expression of gentle kindness, and, later, the devoted affection visible in every look, had given to Eveena's features.

It is, I suppose, hardly natural to man to feel actual unkindness towards a young and beautiful girl who has given no personal offence. Having once admitted the justice of Eveena's plea, and feeling that she would be more pained by the omission than by the fulfilment of the forms which courtesy and common kindness imperatively demanded, I kissed Eunane's brow and spoke a few words to her, with as much of tenderness as I could feel or affect for Eveena's rival, after what had passed to endear Eveena more than ever. The latter waited a little, to allow me spontaneously to perform the same ceremony with the other girls; but seeing my hesitation, she came forward again and presented severally four others—Enva ("Snow" = Blanche), Leenoo ("Rose"), Eiralé, Elfé, all more or less of the usual type of female beauty in Mars, with long full tresses varying in tinge from flax to deep gold or the lightest brown; each with features almost faultless, and with all the attraction (to me unfailing) possessed for men who have passed their youth by *la beauté du Diable*—the bloom of pure graceful girlhood. Eivé, the sixth of the party, standing on the right of the others, and therefore last in place according to Martial usage, was smaller and slighter than Eveena herself, and made an individual impression on my attention by a manifest timidity and agitation greater than any of the rest had evinced. As I removed her veil I was struck by the total unlikeness which her face and form presented to

those I had just saluted. Her hair was so dark as by contrast to seem black ; her complexion less fair than those of her companions, though as fair as that of an average Greek beauty ; her eyes of deepest brown ; her limbs, and especially the hands and feet, marvellously perfect in shape and colour, but in the delicacy and minuteness of their form suggesting, as did all the proportions of her tiny figure, the peculiar grace of childhood ; an image in miniature of faultless physical beauty. In Eivé alone of the bevy I felt a real interest ; but the interest called forth by a singularly pretty child, in whose expression the first glance discerns a character it will take long to read, rather than that commanded by the charms of earliest womanhood.

When I had completed the ceremonial round, there was a somewhat awkward silence, which Eveena at last broke by suggesting that Eunane should show us through the house, with which she had made the earliest acquaintance. This young girl readily took the lead thus assigned to her, and by some delicate manœuvre, whose authorship I could not doubt, I found her hand in mine as we made our tour. The number of chambers was much greater than in Esmo's dwelling, the garden of the peristyle larger and more elaborately arranged, if not more beautiful. The ambau were more numerous than even the domestic service of so large a mansion appeared to require. The birds, whose duties lay outside, were by this time asleep on their perches, and we forbore to disturb them. The central chamber of the seraglio, if I may so call it, the largest and midmost of those in the rear of the garden, devoted as of course to the ladies of the household, was especially magnificent.

When we stood in its midst, shy looks askance from all the six betrayed their secret ambition; though Eivé's was but momentary, and so slight that I felt I might have unfairly suspected her of presumption. I left this room, however, in silence, and assigned to each of my maiden brides, in order as they had been presented to me, the rooms on the left; and then, as we stood once more in the peristyle, having postponed all further arrangements, all distribution of household duties, to the morrow (assigning, however, to Eunane, whose native energy and forwardness had made early acquaintance with the dwelling and its dumb inhabitants, the charge of providing and preparing with their assistance our morning meal), I said, "I have let the business of the evening zyda actually encroach on midnight, and must detain you from your rest no longer. Eveena, you know, I still have need of you."

She was standing at a little distance, next to Eunane; and the latter, with a smile half malicious, half triumphant, whispered something in her ear. There was a suppressed annoyance in Eveena's look which provoked me to interpose. On Earth I should never have been fool enough to meddle in a woman's quarrel. The weakest can take her own part in the warfare of taunt and innuendo, better and more venomously than could dervish, priest, or politician. But Eveena could no more lower herself to the ordinary level of feminine malice than I could have borne to hear her do so; and it was intolerable that one whose sweet humility commanded respect from myself should submit to slight or sneer from the lips and eyes of petulant girls. Eunane

started as I spoke, using that accent which gives its most peremptory force to the Martial imperative.

"Repeat aloud what you have chosen to say to Eveena in my presence."

If the first to express the ill-will excited by Eveena's evident influence, though exerted in their own behalf, it was less that Eunane surpassed her companions in malice than that they fell short of her in audacity. Her school-mates had found her their most daring leader in mischief, the least reluctant scapegoat when mischief was to be atoned. But she was cowed, partly perhaps by her first collision with masculine authority, partly, I fear, by sheer dread of physical force visibly greater than she had ever known by repute. Perhaps she was too much frightened to obey. At any rate, it was from Eveena, despite her pleading looks, that I extorted an answer. She yielded at last only to that formal imperative which her conscience would not permit her to disobey, and which for the first time I now employed in addressing her.

"Eunane only repeated," Eveena said, with a reluctance so manifest that one might have supposed her to be the offender, "a school-girl's proverb:—

'Ware the wrath that stands to cool:
Then the sandal shows the rule.'"

The smile that had accompanied the whisper—though not so much suggestive of a woman's malignity as of a child's exultation in a companion's disgrace—gave point and sting to the taunt. It is on chance, I suppose, that the effect of such things depends. Had the saying been thrown at any of Eunane's equals, I should probably

have been inclined to laugh, even if I felt it necessary to reprimand. But, angered at a hint which placed Eveena on their own level, I forgot how far the speaker's experience and inexperience alike palliated the impertinence. That the insinuation shocked none of those around me was evident. Theirs were not the looks of women, however young and thoughtless, startled by an affront to their sex; but of children amazed at a child's folly in provoking capricious and irresponsible power. The angry quickness with which I turned to Eunane received a double, though doubly unintentional, rebuke, equally illustrative of Martial ideas and usages. The culprit cowered like a child expecting a brutal blow. A gentle pressure on my left arm evinced the same fear in a quarter from which its expression wounded me deeply. That pressure arrested not, as was intended, my hand, but my voice; and when I spoke the frightened girl looked up in surprise at its measured tones.

"Wrong, and wrong thrice over, Eunane. It is for me to teach you the bad taste of bringing into your new home the ideas and language of school. Meanwhile, in no case would you learn more of my rule than concerned your own fault. Take in exchange for your proverb the kindest I have learned in your language:—

‘Whispered warnings reach the heart;
Veil the blush and spare the smart.’

But, happily for you, yourtaunt had not truth enough to sting; and I can tell the story about which you are unduly curious as frankly as you please.—Let me speak now, Eveena, that I may spare the need to speak again and in another tone.—That Eveena seemed to have put us both in a false position only convinced me that she

had a motive she knew would satisfy me as fully as herself. When I learned what that motive was, I was greatly surprised at her unselfishness and courage. If you threw me your veil to save me from drowning, how would you feel if my first words to you were:— ‘No one must think I could not swim, therefore even the household must believe you, in unveiling, guilty of an unpardonable fault’? . . . Answer me, Eunane.”

“I should let you sink next time,” she replied, with a pretty half-dubious sauciness, showing that her worst fears at least were relieved.

“Quite right; but you are less generous than Eveena. To hide how I had acted on her advice, she would have had you suppose her guilty. That you might not laugh at my authority, and ‘find a dragon in the esve’s nest,’ she would have had me treat her as guilty.”

“But I deserved it. A girl has no right to break the seal in the master’s absence,” interposed Eveena, much more distressed than gratified by the vindication to which she was so well entitled.

“Let your tongue sleep, Eveena. So [with a kiss] I blot your first miscalculation, Eunane. Earth [the Evening Star of Mars] light your dreams.”

It was with visible reluctance that Eveena followed me into the chamber we had last left; and she expostulated as earnestly as her obedience would permit against the fiat that assigned it to her.

“Choose what room you please, then,” I said; “but understand that, so far as my will and my trust can make you, you are the mistress here.”

“Well, then,” she answered, “give me the little octagon beside your own:”—the smallest and simplest,

but to my taste the prettiest, room in the house. "I should like to be near you still, if I may; but, believe me, I shall not be frozen (hurt) because you think another hand better able to steer the carriage, if mine may sometimes rest in yours."

Leading her into the room she had chosen, and having installed her among the cushions that were to form her couch, I silenced decisively her renewed protest.

"Let me answer you on this point, once and for ever, Eveena. To me this seems matter of right, not of favour or fitness. But favour and fitness here go with right. I could no more endure to place another before or beside you than I could break the special bond between us, and deny the hope of which the Serpent" (laying my hand on her shoulder-clasp, which, by mere accident, was shaped into a faint resemblance to the mystic coil) "is the emblem; the hope that alone can make such love as ours endurable, or even possible, to creatures that must die. She who knelt with me before the Emerald Throne, who took with me the vows so awfully sanctioned, shall hold the first place in my home as in my heart till the Serpent's promise be fulfilled."

Both were silent for some time, for never could we refer to that Vision—whether an objective fact, or an impression communicated from one spirit to the other by the occult force of intense sympathy—save by such allusion; and the remembrance never failed to affect us both with a feeling too deep for words. Eveena spoke again—

"I am sorry you have so bound yourself; perhaps only because you knew me first. And it shames me to receive fresh proof of your kindness to-night."

"And why, my own?"

"Do not make me feel," she said, "that—though the measured sentences you have taught me to call scolding seemed the sharpest of all penances—there is a heavier yet in the silence which withholds forgiveness."

"What have I yet to forgive, Madonna?"

But Eveena could read my feelings in spite of my words, and knew that the pain she had given was too recent to allow me to misconceive her penitence.

"I *ought* to say, my interference. It was your right to rule as you chose, and my meddling was a far worse offence than Eunane's malice. But it was not *that* you felt too deeply to reprove."

"True! Eunane hurt me a little; but I expected no such misjudgment from you. By the touch that proved your alarm I know that I gave no cause for it."

"How so?" she asked in surprise.

"You laid your hand instinctively on my *left* arm, the one your people use. Had I made the slightest angry gesture, you would have held back my *right*. Had I deserved that Eveena should think so ill of me—think me capable of doing such dishonour to her presence and to my own roof, which should have protected an equal enemy from that which you feared for a helpless girl? For what you would have checked was such a blow as men deal to men who can strike back; and the hand that had given it would have been unfit to clasp man's in friendship or woman's in love. You yourself must have shrunk from its touch."

She caught and held it fast to her lips.

"Can I forget that it saved my life? I don't understand you at all, but I see that I have frozen your heart."

I did fancy for one moment you would strike, as passionate men and women often do strike provoking girls, perhaps forgetting your own strength; and I knew you would be miserable if you did hurt her—in that way. The next moment I was ashamed, more than you will believe, to have wronged you so. Like every man, from the head of a household to the Arch-Judge or the Camptâ, you must rule by fear. But your wrath *will* ‘stand to cool;’ and you will hate to make a girl cry as you would hate to send a criminal to the electric-rack, the lightning-stroke, or the vivisection-table. And, whatever you had done, do you fancy that I could shrink from you? I said, ‘If you weary of your flower-bird you must strike with the hammer;’ and if you could do so, do you think I should not feel for your hand to hold it to the last?”

“Hush, Eveena! how can I bear such words? You might forgive me for any outrage to you: I doubt your easily forgetting cruelty to another. I have not a heart like yours. As I never failed a friend, so I never yet forgave a foe. Yet even I might pardon one of those girls an attempt to poison myself, and in some circumstances I might even learn to like her better afterwards. But I doubt if I could ever touch again the hand that had mixed the poison for another, though that other were my mortal enemy.”

CHAPTER XIX.

A COMPLETE ESTABLISHMENT.

BEFORE I slept Eveena had convinced me, much to my own discomfiture, how very limited must be any authority that could be delegated to her. In such a household there could be no second head or deputy, and an attempt to devolve any effective charge on her would only involve her in trouble and odium. Even at the breakfast, spread as usual in the centre of the peristyle, she entreated that we should present ourselves separately. Eunane appeared to have performed very dexterously the novel duty assigned to her. The *ambau* had obeyed her orders with well-trained promptitude, and the *carvee*, in bringing fruit, leaves, and roots from the outer garden, had more than verified all that on a former occasion Eveena had told me of their cleverness and quick comprehension of instructions. Eunane's face brightened visibly as I acknowledged the neatness and the tempting appearance of the meal she had set forth. She was yet more gratified by receiving charge for the future of the same duty, and authority to send, as is usual, by an *ambâ* the order for that principal part of each day's food which is supplied by the confectioner. By reserving for Eveena the place among the cushions

immediately on my left, I made to the assembled household the expected announcement that she was to be regarded as mistress of the house; feminine punctiliousness on points of domestic precedence strikingly contrasting the uncereemonious character of intercourse among men out of doors. The very ambau recognise the mistress or the favourite, as dogs the master of their Earthly home.

The ladies were at first shy and silent, Eunane only giving me more than a monosyllabic answer to my remarks, and even Eunane never speaking save in reply to me. A trivial incident, however, broke through this reserve, and afforded me a first taste of the petty domestic vexations in store for me. The beverage most to my liking was always the *carcard*—juice flavoured with roasted kernels, something resembling coffee in taste. On this occasion the *carcard* and another favourite dish had a taste so peculiar that I pushed both aside almost untouched. On observing this, the rest—Enva, Leenoo, Elfé, and Eirale—took occasion to criticise the articles in question with such remarks and grimaces as ill-bred children might venture for the annoyance of an inexperienced sister. I hesitated to repress this outbreak as it deserved, till Eunane's bitter mortification was evident in her brightening colour and the doubtful, half-appealing glance of tearful eyes. Then a rebuke, such as might have been appropriately addressed yesterday to these rude school-girls by their governess, at once silenced them. As we rose, I asked Eveena, who, with more courtesy than the rest of us, had finished her portion—

“Is there any justice in these reproaches? I cer-

tainly don't like the carcarâ to-day, but it does not follow that Eunane is in fault."

The rest, Eunane included, looked their annoyance at this appeal; but Eveena's temper and kindness were proof against petulance.

"The carcarâ is in fault," she said; "but I don't think Eunane is. In learning cookery at school she had her materials supplied to her; this time the *carve* has probably given her an unripe or overripe fruit which has spoiled the whole."

"And do you not know ripe from unripe fruit?" I inquired, turning to Eunane.

"How should she?" interposed Eveena. "I doubt if she ever saw them growing."

"How so?" I asked of Eunane.

"It is true," she answered. "I never went beyond the walls of our playground till I came here; and though there were a few flower-beds in the inner gardens, there were none but shade trees among the turf and concrete yards to which we were confined."

"I should have known no better," observed Eveena; "but being brought up at home, I learned to know all the plants in my father's grounds, which were more various, I believe, than usual."

"Then," I said, "Eunane has a new life and a multitude of new pleasures before her. Has this peristyle given you your first sight of flowers beyond those in the beds of your Nursery? And have you never seen anything of the world about you?"

"Never," she said. "And Eveena's excuse for me is, I believe, perfectly true. The *carve* must have been stupid, but I knew no better."

"Well," I rejoined, "you must forgive the bird, as we must excuse you for spoiling our breakfast. I will contrive that you shall know more of fruits and flowers before long. In the meantime, you will probably have a different if not a wider view from this roof than from that of your Nursery."

After all, Eunane's girlhood, typical of the whole life of many Martial women, had not, I suppose, been more dreary or confined than that of children in London, Canton, or Calcutta. But this incident, reminding me how dreary and limited that life was, served to excuse in my eyes the pettiness and poverty of the characters it had produced. A Martial woman's whole experience may well be confined within a few acres, and from the cradle to the grave she may see no more of the world than can be discerned from the roof of her school or her husband's home.

Eunane, with the assistance of the ambau, busied herself in removing the remains of the meal. The other five, putting on their veils, scampered up the inclined plane to the roof, much like children released from table or from tasks. Turning to Eveena, who still remained beside me, I said—

"Get your veil, and come out with me; I have not yet an idea where we are, and scarcely a notion what the grounds are like."

She followed me to my apartment, out of which opened the one she had chosen, and as the window closed behind us she spoke in a tone of appeal—

"Do not insist on my accompanying you. As you bade me always speak my thought, I had much rather you would take one of the others."

"You professed," I said, "to take especial pleasure in a walk with me, and this time I will be careful that you are not overtired."

"Of course I should like it," she answered; "but it would not be just. Please let me this time remain to take my part of the household duties, and make myself acquainted with the house. Choose your companion among the others, whom you have scarcely noticed yet."

Preferring not only Eveena's company, but even my own, to that of any of the six, and feeling myself not a little dependent on her guidance and explanations, I remonstrated. But finding that her sense of justice and kindness would yield to nothing short of direct command, I gave way.

"You forget *my* pleasure," I said at last. "But if you will not go, you must at least tell me which I am to take. I will not pretend to have a choice in the matter."

"Well, then," she answered, "I should be glad to see you take Eunane. She is, I think, the eldest, apparently the most intelligent and companionable, and she has had one mortification already she hardly deserved."

"And is much the prettiest," I added maliciously. But Eveena was incapable of even understanding so direct an appeal to feminine jealousy.

"I think so," she said; "much the prettiest among us. But that will make no difference under her veil."

"And must she keep down her veil," I asked, "in our own grounds?"

Eveena laughed. "Wherever she might be seen by any man but yourself."

"Call her then," I answered.

Eveena hesitated. But having successfully carried her own way on the main question, she would not renew her remonstrances on a minor point; and finding her about to join the rest, she drew Eunane apart. Eunane came up to me alone, Eveena having busied herself in some other part of the house. She approached slowly as if reluctant, and stood silent before me, her manner by no means expressive of satisfaction.

"Eveena thought," I said, "that you would like to accompany me; but if not, you may tell her so; and tell her in that case that she *must* come."

"But I shall be glad to go wherever you please," replied Eunane. "Eveena did not tell me why you sent for me, and"—

"And you were afraid to be scolded for spoiling the breakfast? You have heard quite enough of that."

"You dropped a word last night," she answered, "which made me think you would keep your displeasure till you had me alone."

"Quite true," I said, "if I had any displeasure to keep. But you might spoil a dozen meals, and not vex me half as much as the others did."

"Why?" she asked in surprise. "Girls and women always spite one another if they have a chance, especially one who is in disfavour or disgrace with authority."

"So much the worse," I answered. "And now—you know as much or as little of the house as any of us; find the way into the grounds."

A narrow door, not of crystal as usual, but of metal painted to resemble the walls, led directly from one corner of the peristyle into the grounds outside. I had

inferred on my arrival, by the distance from the road to the house, that their extent was considerable, but I was surprised alike by their size and arrangement. On two sides they were bounded by a wall about four hundred yards in length—that parting them from the road was about twice as long. They were laid out with few of the usual orchard plots and beds of different fruits and vegetables, but rather in the form of a small park, with trees of various sorts, among which the fruit trees were a minority. The surface was broken by natural rising grounds and artificial terraces; the soil was turfed in the manner I have previously described, with minute plants of different colours arranged in bands and patterns. Here and there was a garden consisting of a variety of flower-beds and flowering shrubs; broad concrete paths winding throughout, and a beautiful silver stream meandering hither and thither, and filling several small ponds and fountains. That the grounds immediately appertaining to the house were not intended as usual for the purposes of a farm or kitchen-garden was evident. The reason became equally apparent when, looking towards the north, where no wall bounded them, I saw—over a gate in the middle of a dense hedge of flowering shrubs, which, with a ditch beyond it, formed the limit of the park in that direction—an extensive farm divided by the usual ditches into some twenty-five or thirty distinct fields, and more than a square mile in extent. This, as Eunane's native inquisitiveness and quickness had already learnt, formed part of the estate attached to the mansion and bestowed upon me by the Campâtâ. It was admirably cultivated, containing orchards, fields rich with various thriving crops, and

pastures grazed by the Unicorn and other of the domestic birds and beasts kept to supply Martial tables with milk, eggs, and meat; producing nearly every commodity to which the climate was suited, and, as a very short observation assured me, capable of yielding a far greater income than would suffice to sustain in luxury and splendour a household larger than that enforced upon me. We walked in this direction, my companion talking fluently enough when once I had set her at ease, and seemingly free from the shyness and timidity which Eveena had at first displayed. She paused when we reached a bridge that spanned the ditch dividing the grounds from the farm, aware that, save on special invitation, she might not, even in my company, go beyond the former. I led her on, however, till soon after we had crossed the ditch I saw a man approaching us. On this, I desired Eunane to remain where she was, seating her at the foot of a fruit tree in one of the orchard plots, and proceeded to meet the stranger. After exchanging the usual salute, he came immediately to the point.

"I thought," he said, "that you would not care yourself to undertake the cultivation of so extensive an estate. Indeed, the mere superintendence would occupy the whole of one man's attention, and its proper cultivation would be the work of six or eight. I have had some little experience in agriculture, and determined to ask for this charge."

"And who has recommended you?" I said. "Or have you any sort of introduction or credentials to me?"

He made a sign which I immediately recognised. Caution, however, was imposed by the law to which that sign appealed.

"You can read," I said, "by starlight?"

"Better than by any other," he rejoined with a smile.

One or two more tokens interchanged left me no doubt that the claim was genuine, and, of course, irresistible.

"Enough," I replied. "You may take entire charge on the usual terms, which, doubtless, you know better than I."

"You trust me then, absolutely?" he said, in a tone of some little surprise.

"In trusting you," I replied, "I trust the Zinta. I am tolerably sure to be safe in hands recommended by them."

"You are right," he said, "and how right this will prove to you," and he placed in my hand a small cake upon which was stamped an impression of the signet that I had seen on Esmo's wrist. When he saw that I recognised it, he took it back, and, breaking it into fragments, chewed and swallowed it.

"This," he said, "was given me to avouch the following message:—Our Chiefs are informed that the Order is threatened with a novel danger. Systematic persecution by open force or by law has been attempted and defeated ages ago, and will hardly be tried again. What seems to be intended now is the destruction of our Chiefs, individually, by secret means—means which it is supposed we shall not be able to trace to the instigators, even if we should detect their instruments."

"But," I remarked, "those who have warned you of the danger must know from whom it proceeds, and those who are employed in such an attack must run not only the ordinary risk of assassins, but the further

risk entailed by the peculiar powers of those they assail."

"Those powers," he answered, "they do not understand or recognise. The instruments, I presume, will be encouraged by an assurance that the Courts are in their favour, and by a pledge in the last resort that they shall be protected. The exceptional customs of our Order, especially their refusal to send their children into the public Nurseries, mark out and identify them; and though our places of meeting are concealed and have never been invaded, the fact that we do meet and the persons of those who attend can hardly be concealed."

"But," I asked, "if a charge of assassination is once made and proved, how can the Courts refuse to do justice? Can the instigators protect the culprit without committing themselves?"

"They would appeal, I do not doubt, to a law, passed many ages ago with a special regard to ourselves, but which has not been applied for a score of centuries, putting the members of a secret religious society beyond the pale of legal protection. That we shall ultimately find them out and avenge ourselves, you need not doubt. But in the meantime every known dissident from the customs of the majority is in danger, and persons of note or prominence especially so. Next to Esmo and his son, the husband of his daughter is, perhaps, in as much peril as any one. No open attempt on your life will be adventured at present, while you retain the favour of the Campthâ. But you have made at least one mortal and powerful enemy, and you may possibly be the object of well-

considered and persistent schemes of assassination. On the other hand, next to our Chief and his son, you have a paramount claim on the protection of the Order; and those who with me will take charge of your affairs have also charge to watch vigilantly over your life. If you will trust me beforehand with knowledge of all your movements, I think your chief peril will lie in the one sphere upon which we cannot intrude—your own household; and Clavelta directs your own special attention to this quarter. Immediate danger can scarcely threaten you as yet, save from a woman's hand."

"Poison?"

"Probably," he returned coolly. "But of the details of the plot our Council are, I believe, as absolutely ignorant as of the quarter from which it proceeds."

"And how," I inquired, "can it be that the witness who has informed you of the plot has withheld the names, without which his information is so imperfect, and serves rather to alarm than to protect us?"

"You know," he replied, "the kind of mysterious perception to which we can resort, and are probably aware how strangely lucid in some points, how strangely darkened in others, is the vision that does not depend on ordinary human senses?"

As we spoke we had passed Eunane once or twice, walking backwards and forwards along the path near which she sat. As my companion was about to continue, we were so certainly within her hearing that I checked him.

"Take care," I said; "I know nothing of her except the Campâ's choice, and that she is not of us."

He visibly started.

"I thought," he said, "that the witness of our conversation was one at least as reliable as yourself. I forgot how it happened that you have diverged from the prudence which forbids our brethren to admit to their households aliens from the Order and possible spies on its secrets."

"Of whom do you speak as Clavelta?" I asked. "I was not even aware that the Order had a single head."

"The Signet," replied my friend in evident surprise, "should have distinguished the Arch-Enlightener to duller sight than yours."

We had not spoken, of course, till we were again beyond hearing; but my companion looked round carefully before he proceeded—

"You will understand the better, then, how strong is your own claim upon the care of your brethren, and how confidently you may rely upon their vigilance and fidelity."

"I should regret," I answered, "that their lives should be risked for mine. In dangers like those against which you could protect me, I have been accustomed from boyhood to trust my own right hand. But the fear of secret assassination has often unnerved the bravest men, and I will not say that it may not disturb me."

"For you," he answered, "personally we should care as for one of our brethren exposed to especial danger. For him who saved the descendant of our Founder, and who in her right, after her father and brother, would be the guardian, if not the head, of the only remaining family of his lineage, one and all of us are at need bound to die."

After a few more words we parted, and I rejoined Eunane, and led her back towards the house. I had learnt to consider taciturnity a matter of course, except where there was actual occasion for speech; but Eunane had chattered so fluently and frankly just before, that her absolute silence might have suggested to me the possibility that she had heard and was pondering things not intended for her knowledge, had I been less pre-occupied. Enured to the perils of war, of the chase, of Eastern diplomacy, and of travel in the wildest parts of the Earth, I do not pretend indifference to the fear of assassination, and especially of poison. Cromwell, and other soldiers of equal nerve and clearer conscience, have found their iron courage sorely shaken by a peril against which no precautions were effective and from which they could not enjoy an hour's security. The incessant continuous strain on the nerves is, I suppose, the chief element in the peculiar dread with which brave men have regarded this kind of peril; as the best troops cannot endure to be under fire in their camp. Weighing, however, the probability that girls who had been selected by the Sovereign, and had left their Nursery only to pass directly into my house, could have been already bribed or seduced to become the instruments of murderous treachery, I found it but slight; and before we reached the house I had made up my mind to discard the apprehensions or precautions recommended to me on their account. Far better, if need be, to die by poison than to live in hourly terror of it. Better to be murdered than to suspect of secret treason those with whom I must maintain the most intimate relations, and whose sex and years made it intolerable to believe them

criminal. I dismissed the thought, then ; and believing that I had probably wronged them in allowing it to dwell for a moment in my mind, I felt perhaps more tenderly than before towards them, and certainly indisposed to name to Eveena a suspicion of which I was myself ashamed. Perhaps, too, youth and beauty weighed in my conclusion more than cool reason would have allowed. A Martial proverb says—

“ Trust a foe, and you may rue it ;
Trust a friend, and perish through it.
Trust a woman if you will ;—
Thrice betrayed, you'll trust her still.”

As to the general warning, I was wishful to consult Eveena, and unwilling to withhold from her any secret of my thoughts ; but equally averse to disturb her with alarms that were trying even to nerves seasoned by the varied experience of twenty years against every open peril.

CHAPTER XX.

LIFE, SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC.

As we approached the house I caught sight of Eveena's figure among the party gathered on the roof. She had witnessed the interview, but her habitual and conscientious deference forbade her to ask a confidence not volunteered; and she seemed fully satisfied when, on the first occasion on which we were alone, I told her simply that the stranger belonged to the Zinta and had been recommended by her father himself to the charge of my estate. Though reluctant to disturb her mind with fears she could not shake off as I could, and which would make my every absence at least a season of terror, the sense of insecurity doubtless rendered me more anxious to enjoy whenever possible the only society in which it was permissible to be frank and off my guard. No man in his senses would voluntarily have accepted the position which had been forced upon me. The Zveltau never introduce aliens into their households. Their leading ideas and fundamental principles so deeply affect the conduct of existence, the motives of action, the bases of all moral reasoning—so completely do the inferences drawn from them and the habits of thought to which they lead pervade and tinge the mind, conscience, and even language—

that though it may be easy to "live in the light at home and walk with the blind abroad," yet in the familiar intercourse of household life even a cautious and reserved man (and I was neither) must betray to the keen instinctive perceptions of women whether he thought and felt like those around him, or was translating different thoughts into an alien language. This difficulty is little felt between unbelievers and Christians. The simple creed of the Zinta, however, like that of the Prophet, affects the thought and life as the complicated and subtle mysteries of more elaborate theologies, more refined philosophic systems rarely do.

One of Eveena's favourite quotations bore the unmistakable stamp of Zveltic mysticism :—

" Symbols that invert the sense
Form the Seal of Providence ;
Contradiction gives the key,
Time unlocks the mystery."

The danger in which my relation to the Zinta and its chief involved me, and the presence of half a dozen rivals to Eveena—rivals also to that regard for the Star which at first I felt chiefly for her sake—likely as they seemed to impair the strength and sweetness of the tie between us, actually worked to consolidate and endear it. To enjoy, except on set occasions, without constant liability to interruption, Eveena's sole society was no easy matter. To conceal our real secret, and the fact that there was a secret, was imperative. Avowedly exclusive confidence, conferences from which the rest of the household were directly shut out, would have suggested to their envious tempers that Eveena played the spy on them, or influenced and advised the

exercise of my authority. To be alone with her, therefore, as naturally and necessarily I must often wish to be, required manœuvres and arrangements as delicate and difficult, though as innocent, as those employed by engaged couples under the strict conventions of European household usage; and the comparative rarity of such interviews, and the manner in which they had often to be contrived beforehand, kept alive in its earliest freshness the love which, if not really diminished, generally loses somewhat of its first bloom and delicacy in the unrestrained intercourse of marriage. Absolutely and solely trusted, assured that her company was eagerly sought, and at least as deeply valued as ever—compelled by the ideas of her race to accept the situation as natural and right, and wholly incapable of the pettier and meaner forms of jealousy—Eveena was fully content and happy in her relations with me. That, on the whole, she was not comfortable, or at least much less so than during our suddenly abbreviated honeymoon, was apparent; but her loss of brightness and cheerfulness was visible chiefly in her weary and downcast looks on any occasion when, after being absent for some hours from the house, I came upon her unawares. In my presence she was always calm and peaceful, kind, and seemingly at ease; and if she saw or heard me on my return, though she carefully avoided any appearance of eagerness to greet me sooner than others, or to claim especial attention, she ever met me with a smile of welcome as frank and bright as a young bride on Earth could give to a husband returning to her sole society from a long day of labour for her sake.

In so far as compliance was possible I was compelled

to admit the wisdom of Eveena's plea that no open distinction should be made in her favour. Except in the simple fact of our affection, there was no assignable reason for making her my companion more frequently than Eunane or Eivé. Except that I could trust her completely, there was no distinction of age, social rank, or domestic relation to afford a pretext for exempting her from restraints which, if at first I thought them senseless and severe, were soon justified by experience of the kind of domestic control which just emancipated school-girls expected and required. Nor would she accept the immunity tacitly allowed her. It was not that any established custom or right bounded the arbitrary power of domestic autocracy. The right of all but unbounded wrong, the liberty of limitless caprice, is unquestionably vested in the head of the household. But the very completeness of the despotism rendered its exercise impossible. Force cannot act where there is no resistance. The sword of the Plantagenet could cleave the helmet but not the quilt of down. I could do as I pleased without infringing any understanding or giving any right to complain.

"But," said Eveena, "you have a sense of justice which has nothing to do with law or usage. Even your language is not ours. You think of right and wrong, where we should speak only of what is or is not punishable. You can make a favourite if you will pay the price. Could you endure to be hated in your own home, or I to know that you deserved it? Or, if you could, could you bear to see *me* hated and my life made miserable?"

"They dare not!" I returned angrily; fearing that they had dared, and that she had already felt the spite she was so careful not to provoke.

"Do you think that feminine malice cannot contrive to envenom a dozen stings that I could not explain if I would, and you could not deal with if I did?"

"But," I replied, "it seems admitted that there is no such thing as right or custom. As Enva said, I have bought and paid for them, and may do what I please within the contract; and you agree that that is just what any other man in this world would do."

"Yes," returned Eveena, "and I watched your face while Enva spoke. How did you like her doctrine? Of course you may do as you please—if you can please. You may silence discontent, you may suppress spiteful innuendos and even sulky looks, you may put down mutiny, by sheer terror. Can you? You may command me to go with you whenever you go out; you may take the same means to make me complain of unkindness as to make them conceal it; you may act like one of our own people, if you can stoop to the level of their minds. But we both know that you can do nothing of the kind. How could you bear to be driven into unsparing and undeserved severity, who can hardly bring yourself to enforce the discipline necessary to peace and comfort on those who will only be ruled by fear and would like you better if they feared you more? Did you hear the proverb Leenoo muttered, very unjustly, when she left your room yesterday, 'A favourite wears out many sandals'? No! You see the very phrase wounds and disgusts you. But you would find it a true one. Can you take vengeance for a fault you

have yourself provoked? Can you decide without inquiry, condemn without evidence, punish without hearing? Men do these things, of course, and women expect them. But you—I do not say you would be ashamed so to act—you cannot do it, any more than you can breathe the air of our snow-mountains.”

“At all events, Eveena, I no more dare do it in your presence than I dare forswear the Faith we hold in common.”

But whatever Eveena might exact or I concede, the distinction between the wife who commanded as much respect as affection, and the girls who could at best be pets or playthings, was apparent against our will in every detail of daily life and domestic intercourse. It was alike impossible to treat Eveena as a child and to rule Enva or Eirale as other than children. It was as unnatural to use the tone of command or rebuke to one for whom my unexpressed wishes were absolute law, as to observe the form of request or advice in directing or reproving those whose obedience depended on the consequences of rebellion. It only made matters worse that the distinction corresponded but too accurately to their several deserts. No faults could have been so irritating to Eveena's companions as her undeniable faultlessness.

The ludicrous aspect of my relation to the rest of the household was even more striking than I had expected. That I should find myself in the absurd position of a man entrusted with the direct personal government of half-a-dozen young ladies was even “more truly spoke than meant.” One at least among them might singly have made in time a not unlovable wife, and all, per-

haps, might severally and separately have been reduced to conjugal complaisance. Collectively, they were, as Eveena had said, a set of school-girls, and school-girls used to stricter restraint and much sharper discipline than those of a French or Italian convent. They would have made life a burden to a vigorous English schoolmistress, and imperilled the soul of any Lady-Abbess whose list of permissible penances excluded the dark cell and the scourge. Fortunately for both parties, I had the advantage of governess and Superior in the natural awe which girls feel for the authority of manhood—till they have found out of what soft fibre men are made—and in the artificial fear inspired by domestic usage and tradition. For I was soon aware that even on its ridiculous side the relation was not to be trifled with. The simple indifference a man feels towards the escapades of girlhood was not applicable to women and wives, who yet lacked womanly sense and the feeling of conjugal duty. This serious aspect of their position soon contracted the indulgence naturally conceded to youth's heedlessness and animal spirits. These, displayed at first only in the energy and eagerness of their every movement within the narrow limits of conventional usage, broke all bounds when, after one or two half-timid, half-venturous experiments on my patience, they felt that they had, at least for the moment, exchanged the monotony, the mechanical routine, the stern repression of their life in the great Nurseries, not for the harsh household discipline to which they naturally looked forward, but for the "loosened zone" which to them seemed to promise absolute liberty. When not immediately in my

presence or Eveena's, their keen enjoyment of a life so new, the sudden development of the brighter side of their nature under circumstances that gave play to the vigorous vitality of youth, gave as much pleasure to me as to themselves. But in contact with myself or Eveena they were women, and showed only the wrong side of the varied texture of womanhood. To the master they were slaves, each anxious to attract his notice, win his preference ; before the favourite, spiteful, envious of her and of each other, bitter, malicious, and false. For Eveena's sake, it was impossible to look on with indolent indifference on freaks of temper which, childish in the form they assumed, were envenomed by the deliberate dislike and unscrupulous cunning of jealous women.

But even on the childish side of their character and conduct, they soon displayed a determination to test by actual experiment the utmost extent of the liberty allowed, and the nature and sufficiency of its limits. Eunane was always the most audacious trespasser and representative rebel. Fortunately for her, the daring which had bewildered and exasperated feminine guardians rather amused and interested me, giving some variety and relief to the monotonous absurdity of the situation. Nothing in her conduct was more remarkable or more characteristic than the simplicity and good temper with which she generally accepted as of course the less agreeable consequences of her outbreaks ; unless it were the sort of natural dignity with which, when she so pleased, the game played out and its forfeit paid, the naughty child subsided into the lively but rational companion, and the woman simply ignored the scrapes of the school-girl.

As her character seemed to unfold, Eivé's individuality became as distinctly parted from the rest as Eunane's, though in an opposite direction. Comparatively timid and indolent, without their fulness of life, she seemed to me little more than a child; and she fell with apparent willingness into that position, accepting naturally its privileges and exemptions. She alone was never in the way, never vexatious or exacting. Content with the notice that naturally fell to her share, she obtained the more. Never intruding between Eveena and myself, she alone was not wholly unwelcome to share our accidental privacy when, in the peristyle or the grounds, the others left us temporarily alone. On such occasions she would often draw near and crouch at my feet or by Eveena's side, curling herself like a kitten upon the turf or among the cushions, often resting her little head upon Eveena's knee or mine; generally silent, but never so silent as to seem to be a spy upon our conversation, rather as a favourite child privileged, in consideration of her quietude and her supposed harmlessness and inattention, to remain when others are excluded, and to hear much to which she is supposed not to listen. Having no special duties of her own in the household, she would wait upon and assist Eveena whenever the latter would accept her attendance. When the whole party were assembled, it was her wont to choose her place not in the circle, still less at my side—Eveena's title to the post of honour on the left being uncontested, and Eunane generally occupying the cushions on my right. But Eivé, lying at our feet, would support herself on her arm between my knee and Eunane's, content to attract my hand to

play with her curls or stroke her head. Under such encouragement she would creep on to my lap and rest there, but seldom took any part in conversation, satisfied with the attention one pays half-consciously to a child. A word that dropped from Enva, however, on one occasion, obliged me to observe that it was in Eveena's absence that Eivé always seemed most fully aware of her privileges and most lavish of her childlike caresses. The kind of notice and affection she obtained did not provoke the envy even of Leenoo or Eirale. She no more affected to imitate Eveena's absolute devotion than she ventured on Eunane's reckless petulance. She kept my interest alive by the faults of a spoiled child. Her freaks were always such as to demand immediate repression without provoking serious displeasure, so that the temporary disgrace cost her little, and the subsequent reconciliation strengthened her hold on my heart. But with Eveena, or in her presence, Eivé's waywardness was so suppressed or controlled that Eveena's perceptible coolness towards her—it was never coldness or unkindness—somewhat surprised me.

Few Martialists, when wealthy enough to hand over the management of their property to others, care to interfere, or even to watch its cultivation. This, however, to me was a subject of as much interest as any other of the many peculiarities of Martial society, commerce, and industry, which it concerned me to investigate and understand; and when not otherwise employed, I spent great part of my day in watching, and now and then directing, the work that went on during the whole of the sunlight, and not unfrequently during the night, upon my farm. Davilo, the superintendent, had en-

gaged no fewer than eight subordinates, who, with the assistance of the ambau, the carvee, and the electric machines, kept every portion of the ground in the most perfect state of culture. The most valuable part of the produce consisted of those farinaceous fruits, growing on trees from twenty to eighty feet in height, which form the principal element of Martial food. Between the tropics these trees yield ripe fruit twice a year, during a total period of about three of our months—perhaps for a hundred days. Various gourds, growing chiefly on canes, hanging from long flexile stalks that spring from the top of the stem at a height of from three to eight feet, yield juice which is employed partly in flavouring the various loaves and cakes into which the flour is made, partly in the numerous beverages (never allowed to ferment, and consequently requiring to be made fresh every day), of which the smallest Martial household has a greater variety than the most luxurious palace of the East. The best are made from hard-skinned fruits, whose whole pulp is liquified by piercing the rind before the fruit is fully ripe, and closing the orifice with a wax-like substance, almost exactly according to a practice common in different parts of Asia. The drinks are made, of course, at home. The farinaceous fruits are sold to the confectioners, who take also a portion of the milk and all the meat supplied by the pastures. Many choice fruits grow on shrubs, ranging from the size of a large black currant tree to that of the smallest gooseberry bush. Vines growing along the ground bear clustering nuts, whose kernels are sometimes as hard as that of a cocoa-nut, sometimes almost as soft as butter. The latter with

the juicy fruits, are preserved if necessary for a whole year in storehouses dug in the ground and lined with concrete, in which, by chemical means, a temperature a little above the freezing-point is steadily maintained at very trivial cost. The number of dishes producible by the mixture of these various materials, with the occasional addition of meat, fish, and eggs, is enormous; and it is only when some particular compound is in special favour with the master of the house that it makes its appearance more than perhaps once in ten days upon the same table. The invention of the confectioners is exquisite and inexhaustible; and every table is supplied with a variety of dainties sufficient for a feast in the most hospitable and wealthy household of Europe. Many of the smaller fruit-trees and shrubs yield two crops in the year. The vegetables, crisper, and of much more varied taste than the best Terrestrial salads, sometimes possessing a flavour as *piquant* as that of cinnamon or nutmeg, are gathered continuously from one end of the year to the other.

The vines, tough and fibrous, supply the best and strongest cordage used in Mars. For this purpose they are dried, stripped, combed, and put through an elaborate process of manufacture, which, without weakening the fibres, renders them smooth, and removes the knots in which they naturally abound. The twisted cord of the nut-vine is almost as strong as a metallic wire rope of half its measurement. There is another purpose for which these fibres in their natural state are employed. Simply dried and twisted, they form a scourge as terrible as the Russian knout or African cow-hide, though of a different character—a scourge which,

even in its lightest form, reduces the wildest herd to instant order; and which, as employed on criminals, is hardly less dreaded than that electric rack whereby Martial science inflicts on every nerve a graduated torture such as even ecclesiastical malignity has not invented on Earth—such as I certainly will not place in the hands of Terrestrial rulers.

All these crops are raised with marvellously little human labour, the whole work of ploughing and sowing being done by machinery, that of weeding and harvesting chiefly by the carvee. The ambau climb the trees and pick the fruit from the ends of the branches, which they are also taught to pinch in, so that none grow so long as to break with the weight of these creatures, as clever and agile as the smaller monkeys, but almost as large as an ordinary baboon. It must always be remembered that, size for size, and *cæteris paribus*, all bodies, animate and inanimate, on Mars weigh less than half as much as they would on Earth. Eunane's blunder about the *carcard* was not explained by any subsequent errors of the ambau or carvee, which always selected the ripe fruit with faultless skill, leaving the immature untouched, and throwing aside in small heaps to manure the ground the few that had been allowed to grow too ripe for use. The sums paid from time to time into my hands, received from the sales of produce, were far greater than I could possibly spend in gratifying any taste of my own; and, as I presently found, the idea that the surplus might indulge those of the ladies never entered their minds.

Before we had been settled in our home for three days Eveena had made two requests which I was well

pleased to grant. First, she entreated that I would teach her one at least of the languages with which I was familiar—a task of whose extreme difficulty she had little idea. Compared with her native tongue, the complication and irregularities of the simplest language spoken on Earth are far more arbitrary and provoking than seems the most difficult of ancient or Oriental tongues to a Frenchman or Italian. In order to fulfil my promise that she should assist me in recording my observations and writing out my notes, I chose Latin. Unhappily for her, I found myself as impatient and unsuccessful as I was inexperienced in teaching; and nothing but her exquisite gentleness and forbearance could have made the lessons otherwise than painful to us both. Well for me that the “right to govern wrong” was to her a simple truth—an inalienable marital privilege, to be met with that unqualified submission which must have shamed the worst temper into self-control. Eivé on one occasion made a similar request; but besides that I realised the convenience of a medium of communication understood by ourselves alone, I had no inclination to expose either my own temper or Eivé’s to the trial. Eveena’s second request came naturally from one whose favourite amusement had been the raising and modification of flowers. She asked to be entrusted with the charge of the seeds I had brought from Earth, and to be permitted to form a bed in the peristyle for the purpose of the experiment. Though this disfigured the perfect arrangement of the garden, I was delighted to have so important and interesting a problem worked out by hands so skilful and so careful. I should probably have failed to rear a single plant, even had I been

familiar with those applications of electricity to the purpose which are so extensively employed in Mars. Eveena managed to produce specimens strangely altered, sometimes stunted, sometimes greatly improved, from about one-fourth of the seeds entrusted to her; and among those with which she was most brilliantly successful were some specimens of Turkish roses, the roses of the attar, which I had obtained at Stamboul. My admiration of her patience and pleasure in her success deeply gratified her; and it was a full reward for all her trouble when I suggested that she should send to her sister Zevle a small packet of each of the seeds with which she had succeeded. It happened, however, that the few rose seeds had all been planted; and the flowers, though apparently perfect, produced no seed of their own, probably because they were not suited to the taste of the flower-birds, and Eveena somehow forgot or failed to employ the process of artificial fertilisation.

If anything could have fully reconciled my conscience to the household relations in which I was rather by weakness than by will inextricably entangled, it would have been the certainty that by the sacrifice Eveena had herself enforced on me, and which she persistently refused to recognise as such, she alone had suffered. True that I could not give, and could hardly affect for the wives bestowed on me by another's choice, even such love as the head of a Moslem household may distribute among as many inmates. But to what I could call love they had never looked forward. But for the example daily presented before their own eyes they would no more have missed than they com-

prehended it. That they were happier than they had expected, far happier than they would have been in an ordinary home, happier certainly than in the schools they had quitted, I could not doubt, and they did not affect to deny. If my patience were not proof against vexations the more exasperating from their pettiness, and the sense of ridicule which constantly attached to them, I could read in the manner of most and understand from the words of Eunane, who seldom hesitated to speak her mind, whether its utterances were flattering or wounding, that she and her companions found me not only far more indulgent, but incomparably more just than they had been taught to hope a man could be. Of justice, indeed, as consisting in restraint on one's own temper and consideration for the temper of others, Martial manhood is incapable, or, at any rate, Martial womanhood never suspects its masters.

Moreover, though no longer blest with the spirits of youth, and finding little pleasure in what youth calls pleasure, I had escaped the kind of satiety that seems to attend lives more softly spent than mine had been; and found a very real and unfading enjoyment in witnessing the keen enjoyment of these youthful natures in such liberty as could be accorded and such amusements as the life of this dull and practical world affords.

Among these, two at least are closely similar to the two favourite pleasures of European society. Music appears to have been carried, like most arts and sciences, to a point of mechanical perfection which, I should suppose, like much of the artificial accuracy

and ease which civilisation has introduced, mars rather than enhances the natural gratification enjoyed by simpler ages and races. Almost deaf to music as distinguished from noise, I did not attempt to comprehend the construction of Martial instruments or the nature of the concords they emitted. One only struck me with especial surprise by a peculiarity which, if I could not understand, I could not mistake. A number of variously coloured flames are made to synchronise with or actually emit a number of corresponding notes, dancing to, or, more properly, weaving a series of strangely combined movements in accord with the music, whose vibrations were directly and inseparably connected with their motion. But all music is the work of professional musicians, never the occupation of woman's leisure, never made more charming to the ear by its association with the movement of beloved hands or the tones of a cherished voice. Electric wires, connected with the vast buildings wherein instruments produce what sounds like fine choral singing as well as musical notes, enable the householder to turn on at pleasure music equal, I suppose, to the finest operatic performances or the grandest oratorio, and listen to it at leisure from the cushions of his own peristyle. This was a great though not wholly new delight to Eunane and most of her companions. For their sake only would Eveena ever have resorted to it, for though herself appreciating music not less highly, and educated to understand it much more thoroughly, than they, she could derive little gratification from that which was clearly incomprehensible if not disagreeable to me — could hardly enjoy a pleasure I could not share.

The theatre was a more prized and less common indulgence. It is little frequented by the elder Martialists; and not enjoying it themselves, they seldom sacrifice their hours to the enjoyment of their women. But it forms so important an aid to education, and tends so much to keep alive in the public memory impressions which policy will not permit to fade, that both from the State and from the younger portion of the community it receives an encouragement quite sufficient to reward the few who bestow their time and talent upon it. Great buildings, square or oblong in form, the stage placed at one end, the arched boxes or galleries from which the spectators look down thereon rising tier above and behind tier to the further extremity, are constantly filled. There are no actors, and Martial feeling would hardly allow the appearance of women as actresses. But an art, somewhat analogous to, but infinitely surpassing, that displayed in the manipulation of the most skilfully constructed and most complicated magic lanterns, enables the conductors of the theatre to present upon the stage a truly living and moving picture of any scene they desire to exhibit. The figures appear perfectly real, move with perfect freedom, and seem to speak the sounds which, in fact, are given out by a gigantic hidden phonograph, into which the several parts have long ago been carefully spoken by male and female voices, the best suited to each character; and which, by the reversal of its motion, can repeat the original words almost for ever, with the original tone, accent, and expression. The illusion is far more perfect than that obtained by all the resources of stage management and

all the skill of the actor's art in the best theatres of France. After the first novelty, the first surprise and wonder were exhausted, I must confess that these representations simply bored me, the more from their length and character. But even Eveena enjoyed them thoroughly, and my other companions prized an evening or afternoon thus spent above all other indulgences. A passage running along at the back of each tier admits the spectator to boxes so completely private as to satisfy the strictest requirements of Martial seclusion.

The favourite scenes represent the most striking incidents of Martial history, or realise the life, usages, and manners of ages long gone by, before science and invention had created the perfect but monotonous civilisation that now prevails. One of the most interesting performances I witnessed commenced with the exhibition of a striking scene, in which the union of all the various States that had up to that time divided the planet's surface, and occasionally waged war on one another, in the first Congress of the World, was realised in the exact reproduction of every detail which historic records have preserved. Afterwards was depicted the confusion, declining into barbarism and rapid degradation, of the Communistic revolution, the secession of the Zveltai and their merely political adherents, the construction of their cities, fleets, and artillery, the terrible battles, in which the numbers of the Communists were hurled back or annihilated by the asphyxiator and the lightning gun; and finally, the most remarkable scene in all Martial history, when the last representatives of the great Anarchy, squalid, miserable,

degraded, and debased in form and features, as well as indicating by their dress and appearance the utter ruin of art and industry under their rule, came into the presence of the chief ruler of the rising State—surrounded by all the splendour which the “magic of property,” stimulating invention and fostering science, had created—to entreat admission into the realm of restored civilisation, and a share in the blessings they had so deliberately forfeited and so long striven to deny to others.

CHAPTER XXI.

PRIVATE AUDIENCES.

I SPENT my days between mist and mist, according to the Martial saying, not infrequently in excursions more or less extensive and adventurous, in which I could but seldom ask Eveena's company, and did not care for any other. Comparatively courageous as she had learned to be, and free from all affectation of pretty feminine fear, Eveena could never realise the practical immunity from ordinary danger which a strength virtually double that I had enjoyed on Earth, and thorough familiarity with the dangers of travel, of mountaineering, and of the chase, afforded me. When, therefore, I ventured among the hills alone, followed the fishermen and watched their operations, sometimes in terribly rough weather, from the little open surface-boat which I could manage myself, I preferred to give her no definite idea of my intentions. Davilo, however, protested against my exposure to a peril of which Eveena was happily as yet unaware.

"If your intentions are never known beforehand," he said, "still your habit of going forth alone in places to which your steps might easily be dogged, where you might be shot from an ambush or drowned by a sudden attack from a submarine vessel, will soon be pretty generally understood, if, as I fear, a regular watch is set

upon your life. At least let me know what your intentions are before starting, and make your absences as irregular and sudden as possible. The less they are known beforehand, even in your own household, the better."

"Is it midnight still in the Council Chamber?" I asked.

"Very nearly so. She who has told so much can tell us no more. The clue that placed her in mental relations with the danger did not extend to its authorship. We have striven hard to find in every conceivable direction some material key to the plot, some object which, having been in contact with the persons of those we suspect, probably at the time when their plans were arranged, might serve as a link between her thoughts and theirs; but as yet unsuccessfully. Either her vision is darkened, or the connection we have sought to establish is wanting. But you know who is your unsparing personal enemy; and, after the Sovereign himself, no man in this world is so powerful; while the Sovereign himself is, owing to the restraints of his position, less active, less familiar with others, less acquainted with what goes on out of his own sight. Again I say we can avenge; but against secret murder our powers only avail to deter. If we would save, it must be by the use of natural precautions."

What he said made me desirous of some conversation with Eveena before I started on a meditated visit to the Palace. If I could not tell her the whole truth, she knew something; and I thought it possible on this occasion so far to enlighten her as to consult with her how the secret of my intended journeys should in future

be kept. But I found no chance of speaking to her until, shortly before my departure, I was called upon to decide one of the childish disputes which constantly disturbed my temper and comfort. Mere fleabites they were; but fleas have often kept me awake a whole night in a Turkish caravanserai, and half-a-dozen mosquitos inside an Indian tent have broken up the sleep earned on a long day's march or a sharply contested battlefield. I need only say that I extorted at last from Eveena a clear statement of the trifle at issue, which flatly contradicted those of the four participants in the squabble. She began to suggest a means of proving the truth, and they broke into angry clamour. Silencing them all peremptorily, I drew Eveena into my own chamber, and, when assured that we were unheard, reproved her for proposing to support her own word by evidence.

"Do you think," I said, "that any possible proof would induce me to doubt you, or add anything to the assurance I derive from your word?"

"But," she urged, "that cannot be just to others. They must feel it very hard that your love for me makes you take all I say for truth."

"Not my love, but my knowledge. 'Be not righteous overmuch.' Don't forget that they *know* the truth as well as you."

I would hear no more, and passed to the matter I had at heart. . . .

Earnestly, and in a sense sincerely, as upon my second audience I had thanked the Campatâ for his munificent gifts, no day passed that I would not thankfully have renounced the wealth he had bestowed if I

could at the same time have renounced what was, in intention and according to Martial ideas, the most gracious and most remarkable of his favours. On the present occasion I thought for a moment that such renunciation might have been possible.

The Prince had, after our first interview, observed with regard to every point of my story on which I had been carefully silent a delicacy of reserve very unusual among Martialists, and quite unintelligible to his Court and officers. To-day the conversation in public turned again upon my voyage. Endo and another studiously directed it to the method of steering, and the intentional diminution of speed in my descent, corresponding to its gradual increase at the commencement of the journey—points at which they hoped to find some opening to the mystery of the motive force. The Prince relieved me from some embarrassment by requesting me as usual to attend him to his private cabinet.

He said :—"I have not, as you must be aware, pressed you to disclose a secret which, for some reason or other, you are evidently anxious to preserve. Of course the exclusive possession of a motive power so marvellous as that employed in your voyage is of almost incalculable pecuniary value, and it is perfectly right that you should use your own discretion with regard to the time and the terms of its communication."

"Pardon me," I interposed, "if I interrupt you, Prince, to prevent any misconception. It is not with a view to profit that I have carefully avoided giving any clue whatever to my secret. Your munificence would render it most ungrateful and unjust in me to haggle over the price of any service I could render you; and I should

be greedy indeed if I desired greater wealth than you have bestowed. If I may say so without offending, I earnestly wish that you would permit me, by resigning your gifts, to retain in my own eyes the right to keep my secret without seeming undutiful or unthankful."

"I have said," he replied, "that on that point you misconceive our respective positions. No one supposes that you are indebted to us for anything more than it was the duty of the Sovereign to give, as a mark of the universal admiration and respect, to our guest from another world; still less could any imagine that on such a trifle could be founded any claim to a secret so invaluable. You will offend me much and only if you ever again speak of yourself as bound by personal obligation to me or mine. But as we are wishful to buy, so I cannot understand any reluctance on your part to sell your secret on your own terms."

"I think, Prince," I replied, "that I have already asked you what you would think of a subject of your own, who should put such a power into the hands of enemies as formidable to you as you would be to the races of the Earth."

"And *I* think," he rejoined with a smile, "that I reminded you how little my judgment would matter to one possessed of such a power. I have gathered from your conversation how easily we might conquer a world as far behind us in destructive powers as in general civilisation. But why should you object? You can make your own terms both for yourself and for any of your race for whom you feel an especial interest."

"A traitor is none the less a despicable and loathsome wretch because his Prince cannot punish him. I am

bound by no direct tie of loyalty to any Terrestrial sovereign. I was born the subject of one of the greatest monarchs of the Earth; I left his country at an early age, and my youth was passed in the service of less powerful rulers, to one at least of whom I long owed the same military allegiance that binds your guards and officers to yourself. But that obligation also is at an end. Nevertheless, I cannot but recognise that I owe a certain fealty to the race to which I belong, a duty to right and justice. Even if I thought, which I do not think, that the Earth would be better governed and its inhabitants happier under your rule, I should have no right to give them up to a conquest I know they would fiercely and righteously resist. If—pardon me for saying it—you, Prince, would commit no common crime in assailing and slaughtering those who neither have wronged nor can wrong you, one of themselves would be tenfold more guilty in sharing your enterprise.”

“You shall ensure,” he replied, “the good government of your own world as you will. You shall rule it with all the authority possessed by the Regents under me, and by the laws which you think best suited to races very different from our own. You shall be there as great and absolute as I am here, paying only an obedience to me and my successors which, at so immense a distance, can be little more than formal.”

“Is it to acquire a merely formal power that a Prince like yourself would risk the lives of your own people, and sacrifice those of millions of another race?”

“To tell you the truth,” he replied, “I count on commanding the expedition myself, and perhaps I care more

for the adventure than for its fruits. You will not expect me to be more chary of the lives of others than of my own?"

"I understand, and as a soldier could share, perhaps, a feeling natural to a great, a capable, and an ambitious Prince. But alike as soldier and subject it is my duty to resist, not to aid, such an ambition. My life is at your disposal, but even to save my life I could not betray the lives of hundreds of millions and the future of a whole world."

"I fail to understand you fully," he said, abandoning with a sigh a hope that had evidently been the object of long and eager day-dreams. "But in no case would I try to force from you what you will not give or sell; and if you speak sincerely—and I suppose you must do so, since I can see no motive but those you assign that could induce you to refuse my offer—I must believe in the existence of what I have heard of now and then but deemed incredible—men who are governed by care for other things than their own interests, who believe in right and wrong, and would rather suffer injustice than commit it."

"You may be sure, Prince," I replied, perhaps imprudently, "that there are such men in your own world, though they are perhaps among those who are least known and least likely to be seen at your Court."

"If you know them," he said, "you will render me no little service in bringing them to my knowledge."

"It is possible," I ventured to observe, "that their distinguishing excellences are connected with other distinctions which might render it a disservice to them

to indicate their peculiar character, I will not say to yourself, but to those around you."

"I hardly understand you," he rejoined. "Take, however, my assurance that nothing you say here shall, without your own consent, be used elsewhere. It is no light gratification, no trifling advantage to me, to find one man who has neither fear nor interest that can induce him to lie to me; to whom I can speak, not as sovereign to subject, but as man to man, and of whose private conversation my courtiers and officials are not yet suspicious or jealous. You shall never repent any confidence you give to me."

My interest in and respect for the strange character so manifestly suited for, so intensely weary of, the grandest position that man could fill, increased with each successive interview. I never envied that greatness which seems to most men so enviable. The servitude of a constitutional King, so often a puppet in the hands of the worst and meanest of men—those who prostitute their powers as rulers of a State to their interests as chiefs of a faction—must seem pitiable to any rational manhood. But even the autocracy of the Sultan or the Czar seems ill to compensate the utter isolation of the throne; the lonely grandeur of one who can hardly have a friend, since he can never have an equal, among those around him. I do not wonder that a tinge of melancholo-mania is so often perceptible in the chiefs of that great House whose Oriental absolutism is only "tempered by assassination." But an Earthly sovereign may now and then meet his fellow-sovereigns, whether as friends or foes, on terms of frank hatred or loyal openness. His domestic relations, though never secure

and simple as those of other men, may relieve him at times from the oppressive sense of his sublime solitude; and to his wife, at any rate, he may for a few minutes or hours be the husband and not the king. But the absolute Ruler of this lesser world had neither equal friends nor open foes, neither wife nor child. How natural then his weariness of his own life; how inevitable his impatient scorn of those to whom that life was devoted! A despot not even accountable to God—a Prince who, till he conversed with me, never knew that the universe contained his equal or his like—it spoke much, both for the natural strength and soundness of his intellect and for the excellence of his education, that he was so sane a man, so earnest, active, and just a ruler. His reign was signalised by a better police, a more even administration of justice, a greater efficiency, judgment, and energy in the execution of great works of public utility, than his realm had known for a thousand years; and his duty was done as diligently and conscientiously as if he had known that conscience was the voice of a supreme Sovereign, and duty the law of an unerring and unescapable Lawgiver. Alone among a race of utterly egotistical cowards, he had the courage of a soldier, and the principles, or at least the instincts, worthy of a Child of the Star. With him alone could I have felt a moment's security from savage attempts to extort by terror or by torture the secret I refused to sell; and I believe that his generous abstinence from such an attempt was as exasperating as it was incomprehensible to his advisers, and chiefly contributed to involve him in the vengeance which baffled greed and humbled personal pride had leagued to wreak

upon myself, as on those with whose welfare and safety my own were inextricably intertwined. It was a fortunate, if not a providential, combination of circumstances that compelled the enemies of the Star, primarily on my account, to interweave with their scheme of murderous persecution and private revenge an equally ruthless and atrocious treason against the throne and person of their Monarch.

My audience had detained me longer than I had expected, and the evening mist had fairly closed in before I returned. Entering, not as usual through the grounds and the peristyle, but by the vestibule and my own chamber, and hidden by my half-open window, I overheard an exceedingly characteristic discussion on the incident of the morning.

"Serve her right!" Leenoo was saying. "That she should for once get the worst of it, and be disbelieved to sharpen the sting!"

"How do you know?" asked Enva. "I don't feel so sure we have heard the last of it."

"Eveena did not seem to have liked her half-hour," answered Leenoo spitefully. "Besides, if he did not disbelieve her story, he would have let her prove it."

"Is that your reliance?" broke in Eunane. "Then you *are* swinging on a rotten branch. I would not believe my ears if, for all that all of us could invent against her, I heard him so much as ask Eveena, 'Are you speaking the truth?'"

"It is very uneven measure," muttered Enva.

"Uneven!" cried Eunane. "Now, I think *I* have the best right to be jealous of her place; and it does sting me that, when he takes me for his companion out

of doors, or makes most of me at home, it is so plain that he is taking trouble, as if he grudged a soft word or a kiss to another as something stolen from her. But he deals evenly, after all. If he were less tender of her we should have to draw our zones tighter. But he won't give us the chance to say, 'Teach the *amba* with stick and the *esve* with sugar.'

"I do say it. She is never snubbed or silenced; and if she has had worse than what he calls 'advice' to-day, I believe it is the first time. She has never 'had cause to wear the veil before the household' [to hide blushes or tears], or found that his 'lips can give sharper sting than their kiss can heal,' like the rest of us."

"What for? If he wished to find her in fault he would have to watch her dreams. Do you expect him to be harder to her than to us? He don't 'look for stains with a microscope.' None of us can say that he 'drinks tears for taste.' None of us ever 'smarted because the sun scorched *him*.' Would you have him 'tie her hands for being white'?" [punish her for perfection].

"She is never at fault because he never believes us against her," returned Leenoo.

"How often would he have been right? I saw nothing of to-day's quarrel, but I know beforehand where the truth lay. I tell you this: he hates the sandal more than the sin, but, strange as it seems, he hates a falsehood worse still; and a falsehood against Eveena—— If you want to feel 'how the spear-grass cuts when the sheath bursts,' let him find you out in an experiment like this! You congratulate yourself, Leenoo, that you have got her into trouble. *Elnerve* that you

are!—if you have, you had better have poisoned his cup before his eyes. For every tear he sees her shed he will reckon with us at twelve years' usury."

"You have made her shed some," retorted Enva.

"Yes," said Eunane, "and if he knew it, I should like half a year's penance in the black sash" [as the black sheep or scapegoat of her Nursery] "better than my next half-hour alone with him. When I was silly enough to tie the veil over her mouth" [take the lead in sending her to Coventry] "the day after we came here, I expected to pay for it, and thought the fruit worth the scratches. But when he came in that evening, nodded and spoke kindly to us, but with his eyes seeking for her; when he saw her at last sitting yonder with her head down, I saw how his face darkened at the very idea that she was vexed, and I thought the flash was in the cloud. When she sprang up as he called her, and forced a smile before he looked into her face, I wished I had been as ugly as Minnoo, that I might have belonged to the miserliest, worst-tempered man living, rather than have so provoked the giant."

"But what did he do?"

"Well that he don't hear you!" returned Eunane. "But I can answer;—nothing. I shivered like a *leveloo* in the wind when he came into my room, but I heard nothing about Eveena. I told Eivé so next day—you remember Eivé would have no part with us? 'And you were called the cleverest girl in your Nursery!' she said; 'you have just tied your own hands and given your sandal into Eveena's. Whenever she tells him, you will drink the cup she chooses to mix for you, and very salt you will find it.'"

"*Crach!*" (tush or stuff), said Eirale contemptuously. "We have 'filled her robe with pins' for half a year since then, and she has never been able to make him count them."

"Able!" returned Eunane sharply, "do you know no better? Well, I chose to fancy she was holding this over me to keep me in her power. One day she spoke—choosing her words so carefully—to warn me how I was sure to anger Clafempta" (the master of the household) "by pushing my pranks so often to the verge of safety and no farther. I answered her with a taunt, and, of course, that evening I was more perverse than ever, till even he could stand it no longer. When he quoted—

'More lightly treat whom haste or heat to headlong trespass urge;
The heaviest sandals fit the feet that ever tread the verge'—

I was well frightened. I saw that the bough had broken short of the end, and that for once Clafempta could mean to hurt. But Eveena kept him awhile, and when he came to me, she had persuaded him that I was only mischievous, not malicious, teasing rather than trespassing. But his last words showed that he was not so sure of that. 'I have treated you this time as a child whose petulance is half play; but if you would not have your teasing returned with interest, keep it clipped; and—keep it for *me*.' I have often tormented her since then, but I could not for shame help you to spite her."

"*Crach!*" said Enva. "Eveena might think it wise to make friends with you; but would she bear to be slighted and persecuted a whole summer if she could help herself? You know that—

“ Man’s control in woman’s hand
Sorest tries the household band.
Closer favourite’s kisses cling,
Favourite’s fingers sharper sting. ”

“ Very likely,” replied Eunane. “ I cannot understand any more than you can why Eveena screens instead of punishing us ; why she endures what a word to him would put down under her sandal ; but she does. Does she cast no shadow because it never darkens his presence to us ? And after all, her mind is not a deeper darkness to me than his. He enjoys life as no man here does ; but what he enjoys most is a good chance of losing it ; while those who find it so tedious guard it like watch-dragons. When the number of accidents made it difficult to fill up the Southern hunt at any price, the Camptâ’s refusal to let him go so vexed him that Eveena was half afraid to show her sense of relief. You would think he liked pain—the scars of the *kargynda* are not his only or his deepest ones—if he did not catch at every excuse to spare it. And, again, why does he speak to Eveena as to the Camptâ, and to us as to children—‘ child ’ is his softest word for us ? Then, he is patient where you expect no mercy, and severe where others would laugh. When Enva let the electric stove overheat the water, so that he was scalded horribly in his bath, we all counted that he would at least have paid her back the pain twice over. But as soon as Eveena and Eivé had arranged the bandages, he sent for her. We could scarcely bring you to him, Enva ; but he put out the only hand he could move to stroke your hair as he does Eivé’s, and spoke for once with real tenderness, as if you were the

person to be pitied! Any one else would have laughed heartily at the figure her *esve* made with half her tail pulled out. But not all Eveena's pleading could obtain pardon for me."

"That was caprice, not even dealing," said Leenoo. "You were not half so bad as Enva."

"He made me own that I was," replied Eunane. "It never occurred to him to suppose or say that she did it on purpose. But I was cruel on purpose to the bird, if I were not spiteful to its mistress. 'Don't you feel,' he said, 'that intentional cruelty is what no ruler, whether of a household or of a kingdom, has a right to pass over? If not, you can hardly be fit for a charge that gives animals into your power.' I never liked him half so well; and I am sure I deserved a severer lesson. Since then, I cannot help liking them both; though it is mortifying to feel that one is nothing before her."

"It is intolerable," said Enva bitterly; "*I* detest her."

"Is it her fault?" asked Eunane with some warmth. "They are so like each other and so unlike us, that I could fancy she came from his own world. I went to her next day in her own room."

"Ay," interjected Leenoo with childish spite, "'kiss the foot and 'scape the sandal.'"

"Think so," returned Eunane quietly, "if you like. I thought I owed her some amends. Well, she had her bird in her lap, and I think she was crying over it. But as soon as she saw me she put it out of sight. I began to tell her how sorry I was about it, but she would not let me go on. She kissed me as no one ever

kissed me since my school friend Erme died three years ago; and she cried more over the trouble I had brought on myself than over her pet. And since then," Eunane went on with a softened voice, "she has showed me how pretty its ways are, how clever it is, how fond of her, and she tries to make it friends with me. . . . Sometimes I don't wonder she is so much to him and he to her. She was brought up in the home where she was born. Her father is one of those strange people; and I fancy there is something between her and Claspemta more than . . ."

I could not let this go on; and stepping back from the window as if I had but just returned, I called Eunane by name. She came at once, a little surprised at the summons, but suspecting nothing. But the first sight of my face startled her; and when, on the impulse of the moment, I took her hands and looked straight into her eyes, her quick intelligence perceived at once that I had heard at least part of the conversation.

"Ah," she said, flushing and hanging her head, "I am caught now, but"—in a tone half of relief—"I deserve it, and I won't pretend to think that you are angry only because Eveena is your favourite. You would not allow any of us to be spited if you could help it, and it is much worse to have spited her."

I led her by the hand across the peristyle into her own chamber, and when the window closed behind us, drew her to my side.

"So you would rather belong to the worst master of your own race than to me?"

"Not now," she answered. "That was my first

thought when I saw how you felt for Eveena, and knew how angry you would be when you found how we—I mean how I—had used her, and I remembered how terribly strong you were. I know you better now. It is for women to strike with five fingers” (in unmeasured passion); “only, don’t tell Eveena. Besides,” she murmured, colouring, with drooping eyelids, “I had rather be beaten by you than caressed by another.”

“Eunane, child, you might well say you don’t understand me. I could not have listened to your talk if I had meant to use it against you; and with *you* I have no cause to be displeased. Nay” (as she looked up in surprise), “I know you have not used Eveena kindly, but I heard from yourself that you had repented. That she, who could never be coaxed or compelled to say what made her unhappy, or even to own that I had guessed it truly, has fully forgiven you, you don’t need to be told.”

“Indeed, I don’t understand,” the girl sobbed. “Eveena is always so strangely soft and gentle—she would rather suffer without reason than let us suffer who deserve it. But just because she is so kind, you must feel the more bitterly for her. Besides,” she went on, “I was so jealous—as if you could compare me with her—even after I had felt her kindness. No! you cannot forgive *for her*, and you ought not.”

“Child,” I answered, sadly enough, for my conscience was as ill at ease as hers, with deeper cause, “I don’t tell you that your jealousy was not foolish and your petulance culpable; but I do say that neither Eveena nor I have the heart—perhaps I have not even the

right—to blame you. It is true that I love Eveena as I can love no other in this world or my own. How well she deserves that love none but I can know. So loving her, I would not willingly have brought any other woman into a relation which could make her dependent upon or desirous of such love as I cannot give. You know how this relation to you and the others was forced upon me. When I accepted it, I thought I could give you as much affection as you would find elsewhere. How far and why I wronged Eveena is between her and myself. I did not think that I could be wronging you.”

Very little of this was intelligible to Eunane. She felt a tenderness she had never before received ; but she could not understand my doubt, and she replied only to my last words.

“Wrong us ! How could you ? Did we ask whether you had another wife, or who would be your favourite ? Did you promise to like us, or even to be kind to us ? You might have neglected us altogether, made one girl your sole companion, kept all indulgences, all favours, for her ; and how would you have wronged us ? If you had turned on us when she vexed you, humbled us to gratify her caprice, ill-used us to vent your temper, other men would have done the same. Who else would have treated us as you have done ? Who would have been careful to give each of us her share in every pleasure, her turn in every holiday, her employment at home, her place in your company abroad ? Who would have inquired into the truth of our complaints and the merits of our quarrels ; would have made so many excuses for our faults, given us so many patient warn-

ings? . . . Wronged us! There may be some of us who don't like you; there is not one who could bear to be sent away, not one who would exchange this house for the palace of the Campâtâ though you pronounce him kingly in nature as in power."

She spoke as she believed, if she spoke in error.

"If so, my child, why have you all been so bitter against Eveena? Why have you yourself been jealous of one who, as you admit, has been a favourite only in a love you did not expect?"

"But we saw it, and we envied her so much love, so much respect," she replied frankly. "And for myself,"—she coloured, faltered, and was silent.

"For yourself, my child?"

"I was a vain fool," she broke out impetuously. "They told me that I was beautiful, and clever, and companionable. I fancied I should be your favourite, and hold the first place; and when I saw her, I would not see her grace and gentleness, or observe her soft sweet voice, and the charms that put my figure and complexion to shame, and the quiet sense and truth that were worth twelvefold my quickness, my memory, and my handiness. I was disappointed and mortified that she should be preferred. Oh, how you must hate me, Clafempta; for I hate myself while I tell you what I have been!"

According to European doctrine, my fealty to Eveena must then have been in peril. And yet, warmly as I felt for Eunane, the element in her passionate confession that touched me most was her recognition of Eveena's superiority; and as I soothed and comforted the half-childish penitent, I thought how much it would

please Eveena that I had at last come to an understanding with the companion she avowedly liked the best.

"But, Eunane," I said at last, "do you remember what you were saying when I called you—called you on purpose to stop you? You said that there was something between Eveena and myself more than—more than what? What did you mean? Speak frankly, child; I know that this time you were not going to scald me on purpose."

"I don't know quite what I meant," she replied simply. "But the first time you took me out, I heard the superintendent say some strange things; and then he checked himself when he found your companion was not Eveena. Then Eivé—I mean—you use expressions sometimes in talking to Eveena that we never heard before. I think there is some secret between you."

"And if there be, Eunane, were *you* going to betray it—to set Enva and Leenoo on to find it out?"

"I did not think," she said. "I never do think before I get into trouble. I don't say, forgive me this time; but I *will* hold my tongue for the future."

By this time our evening meal was ready. As I led Eunane to her place, Eveena looked up with some little surprise. It was rarely that, especially on returning from absence, I had sought any other company than hers. But there was no tinge of jealousy or doubt in her look. On the contrary, as, with her entire comprehension of every expression of my face, and her quickness to read the looks of others, she saw in both countenances that we were on better terms than ever before,

her own brightened at the thought. As I placed myself beside her, she stole her hand unobserved into mine, and pressed it as she whispered—

“You have found her out at last. She is half a child as yet; but she has a heart—and perhaps the only one among them.”

“The four,” as I called them, looked up as we approached with eager malice:—bitterly disappointed, when they saw that Eunane had won something more than pardon. Whatever penance they had dreaded, their own escape ill compensated the loss of their expected pleasure in the pain and humiliation of a finer nature. Eunane’s look, timidly appealing to her to ratify our full reconciliation, answered by Eveena’s smile of tender, sisterly sympathy, enhanced and completed their discomfiture.

CHAPTER XXII.

PECULIAR INSTITUTIONS.

A CHIEF luxury and expense in which, when aware what my income was, I indulged myself freely was the purchase of Martial literature. Only ephemeral works are as a rule printed in the phonographic character, which alone I could read with ease. The Martialists have no newspapers. It does not seem to them worth while to record daily the accidents, the business incidents, the prices, the amusements, and the follies of the day; and politics they have none. In no case would a people so coldly wise, so thoroughly impressed by experience with a sense of the extreme folly of political agitation, legislative change, and democratic violence, have cursed themselves with anything like the press of Europe or America. But as it is, all they have to record is gathered each twelfth day at the telegraph offices, and from these communicated on a single sheet about four inches square to all who care to receive it. But each profession or occupation that boasts, as do most, an organisation and a centre of discussion and council, issues at intervals books containing collected facts, essays, reports of experiments, and lectures. Every man who cares to communicate his passing ideas to the public does so by means of the phonograph. When he has a graver work,

which is, in his view at least, of permanent importance to publish, it is written in the stylographic character, and sold at the telegraphic centres. The extreme complication and compression employed in this character had, as I have already said, rendered it very difficult to me; and though I had learnt to decipher it as a child spells out the words which a few years later it will read unconsciously by the eye, the only manner in which I could quickly gather the sense of such books was by desiring one or other of the ladies to read them aloud. Strangely enough, next to Eveena, Eivé was by far the best reader. Eunane understood infinitely better what she was perusing; but the art of reading aloud is useless, and therefore never taught, in schools whose every pupil learns to read with the usual facility a character which the practised eye can interpret incomparably faster than the voice could possibly utter it. This reading might have afforded many opportunities of private converse with Eveena, but that Eivé, whose knowledge was by no means proportionate to her intelligence, entreated permission to listen to the books I selected; and Eveena, though not partial to her childish companion and admirer, persuaded me not to refuse.

The story of my voyage and reports of my first audience at Court were, of course, widely circulated and extensively canvassed. Though regarded with no favour, especially by the professed philosophers and scientists, my adventures and myself were naturally an object of great curiosity; and I was not surprised when a civil if cold request was preferred, on behalf of what I may call the Martial Academy, that I would deliver in their hall a series of lectures, or rather a connected

oral account of the world from which I professed to have come, and of the manner in which my voyage had been accomplished. After consulting Eveena and Davilo, I accepted the invitation, and intended to take the former with me. She objected, however, that while she had heard much in her father's house and during our travels of what I had to tell, her companions, scarcely less interested, were comparatively ignorant. Indiscreetly, because somewhat provoked by these repeated sacrifices, as much of my inclination as her own, I mentioned my purpose at our evening meal, and bade her name those who should accompany me. I was a little surprised when, carefully evading the dictation to which she was invited, she suggested that Eunane and Eivé would probably most enjoy the opportunity. That she should be willing to get rid of the most wilful and petulant of the party seemed natural. The other selection confirmed the impression I had formed, but dared not express to one whom I had never blamed without finding myself in the wrong, that Eveena regarded Eivé with a feeling more nearly approaching to jealousy than her nature seemed capable of entertaining. I obeyed, however, without comment; and both the companions selected for me were delighted at the prospect.

The Academy is situated about half-way between Amacasfe and the Residence; the facilities of Martial travelling, and above all of telegraphic and telephonic communication, dispensing with all reason for placing great institutions in or near important cities. We travelled by balloon, as I was anxious to improve myself in the management of these machines. After frightening my companions so far as to provoke some

outery from Eivé, and from Eunane some saucy remarks on my clumsiness, on which no one else would have ventured, I descended safely, if not very creditably, in front of the building which serves as a local centre of Martial philosophy. The residences of some sixty of the most eminent professors of various sciences—elected by their colleagues as seats fall vacant, with the approval of the highest Court of Judicature and of the *Cainptâ*—cluster around a huge building in the form of a hexagon made up of a multitude of smaller hexagons, in the centre whereof is the great hall of the same shape. In the smaller chambers which surround it are telephones through which addresses delivered in a hundred different quarters are mechanically repeated; so that the residents or temporary visitors can here gather at once all the knowledge that is communicated by any man of note to any audience throughout the planet. On this account numbers of young men just emancipated from the colleges come here to complete their education; and above each of the auditory chambers is another divided into six small rooms, wherein these visitors are accommodated. A small house belonging to one of the members who happened to be absent was appropriated to me during my stay, and in its hall the philosophers gathered in the morning to converse with or to question me in detail respecting the world whose existence they would not formally admit, but whose life, physical, social, and political, and whose scientific and human history, they regarded with as much curiosity as if its reality were ascertained. Courtesy forbids evening visits unless on distinct and pressing invitation, it being supposed that the head of a household may care to spend

that part of his time, and that alone, with his own family.

The Academists are provided by the State with incomes, of an amount very much larger than the modest allowances which the richest nations of the Earth almost grudge to the men whose names in future history will probably be remembered longer than those of eminent statesmen and warriors. Some of them have made considerable fortunes by turning to account in practical invention this or that scientific discovery. But as a rule, in Mars as on Earth, the gifts and the career of the discoverer and the inventor are distinct. It is, however, from the purely theoretical labours of the men of science that the inventions useful in manufactures, in communication, in every department of life and business, are generally derived; and the prejudice or judgment of this strange people has laid it down that those who devote their lives to work in itself unremunerative, but indirectly most valuable to the public, should be at least as well off as the subordinate servants of the State. In society they are perhaps more honoured than any but the highest public authorities; and my audience was the most distinguished, according to the ideas of that world, that it could furnish.

At noon each day I entered the hall, which was crowded with benches rising on five sides from the centre to the walls, the sixth being occupied by a platform where the lecturer and the members of the Academy sat. After each lecture, which occupied some two hours, questions more or less perplexing were put by the latter. Only, however, on the first occasion, when I reserved, as before the Zinta and the Court, all

information that could enable my hearers to divine the nature of the apergic force, was incredulity so plainly insinuated as to amount to absolute insult.

"If," I said, "you choose to disbelieve what I tell you, you are welcome to do so. But you are not at liberty to express your disbelief to me. To do so is to charge me with lying; and to that charge, whatever may be the customs of this world, there is in mine but one answer," and I laid my hand on the hilt of the sword I wore in deference to Davilo's warnings, but which he and others considered a Terrestrial ornament rather than a weapon.

The President of the Academy quietly replied—"Of all the strange things we have heard, this seems the strangest. I waive the probability of your statements, or the reasonableness of the doubts suggested. But I fail to understand how, here or in any other world, if the imputation of falsehood be considered so gross an offence—and here it is too common to be so regarded—it can be repelled by proving yourself more skilled in the use of weapons, or stronger or more daring than the person who has challenged your assertion."

The moral courage and self-possession of the President were as marked as his logic was irrefragable; but my outbreak, however illogical, served its purpose. No one was disposed to give mortal offence to one who showed himself so ready to resent it, though probably the apprehension related less to my swordsmanship than the favour I was supposed to enjoy with the Suzerain.

Seriously impressed by the growing earnestness of Davilo's warnings, and feeling that I could no longer conceal the pressure of some anxiety on my mind,

gradually, cautiously, and tenderly I broke to Eveena what I had learned, with but two reserves. I would not render her life miserable by the suggestion of possible treason in our own household. That she might not infer this for herself, I led her to believe that the existence and discovery of the conspiracy was of a date long subsequent to my acceptance of the Sovereign's unwelcome gift. She was deeply affected, and, as I had feared, exceedingly disturbed. But, very characteristically, the keenest impression made upon her mind concerned less the urgency of the peril than its origin, the fact that it was incurred through and for her. On this she insisted much more than seemed just or reasonable. It was for her sake, no doubt, that I had made the Regent of Elcavoo my bitter, irreconcilable foe. It was my marriage with her, the daughter of the most eminent among the chiefs of the Zinta, that had marked me out as one of the first and principal victims, and set on my head a value as high as on that of any of the Order save the Arch-Enlightener himself, whose personal character and social distinction would have indicated him as especially dangerous, even had his secret rank been altogether unsuspected. It was impossible to soothe Eveena's first outbreak of feeling, or reason with her illogical self-reproach. Compelled at last to admit that the peril had been unconsciously incurred when she neither knew nor could have known it, she pleaded eagerly and earnestly for permission to repair by the sacrifice of herself the injury she had brought upon me. It was useless to tell her that the acceptance of such a sacrifice would be a thousand-fold worse than death. Even the depth and devotion of her own love could not

persuade her to realise the passionate earnestness of mine. It was still more in vain to remind her that such a concession must entail the dishonour that man fears above all perils; would brand me with that indelible stain of abject personal cowardice which for ever degrades and ruins not only the fame but the nature of manhood, as the stain of wilful unchastity debases and ruins woman.

"Rescind our contract," she insisted, pleading, with the overpowering vehemence of a love absolutely unselfish, against love's deepest instincts and that egotism which is almost inseparable from it; giving passionate utterance to an affection such as men rarely feel for women, women perhaps never for men. "Divorce me; force the enemy to believe that you have broken with my father and with his Order; and, favoured as you are by the Sovereign, you will be safe. Give what reason you will; say that I have deserved it, that I have forced you to it. I know that contracts *are* revoked with the full approval of the Courts and of the public, though I hardly know why. I will agree; and if we are agreed, you can give or withhold reasons as you please. Nay, there can be no wrong to me in doing what I entreat you to do. I shall not suffer long—no, no, *I will* live, I will be happy"—her face white to the lips, her streaming tears were not needed to belie the words! "By your love for me, do not let me feel that you are to die—do not keep me in dread to hear that you have died—for me and through me."

If it had been in her power to leave me, if one-half of the promised period had not been yet to run, she might have enforced her purpose in despite of all that

I could urge;—of reason, of entreaty, of the pleadings of a love in this at least as earnest as her own. Nay, she would probably have left me, in the hope of exhibiting to the world the appearance of an open quarrel, but for a peculiarity of Martial law. That law enforces, on the plea of either party, "specific performance" of the marriage contract. I could reclaim her, and call the force of the State to recover her. When even this warning at first failed to enforce her submission, I swore by all I held sacred in my own world and all she revered in hers—by the symbols never lightly invoked, and never, in the course of ages that cover thrice the span of Terrestrial history and tradition, invoked to sanction a lie; symbols more sacred in her eyes than, in those of mediæval Christendom, the gathered relics that appalled the heroic soul of Harold Godwinsson—that she should only defeat her own purpose; that I would reclaim my wife before the Order and before the law, thus asserting more clearly than ever the strength of the tie that bound me to her and to her house. The oath which it was impossible to break, perhaps yet more the cold and measured tone with which I spoke, in striving to control the white heat of a passion as much stronger as it was more selfish than hers—a tone which sounded to myself unnatural and alien—at last compelled her to yield; and silenced her in the only moment in which the depths of that nature, so sweet and soft and gentle, were stirred by the violence of a moral tempest. . . .

A marvellously perfect example of Martial art and science is furnished by the Observatory of the Astro-nomic Academy, on a mountain about twenty miles from

the Residence. The hill selected stands about 4000 feet above the sea-level, and almost half that height above any neighbouring ground. It commands, therefore, a most perfect view of the horizon all around, even below the technical or theoretic horizon of its latitude. A volcano, like all Martial volcanoes very feeble, and never bursting into eruptions seriously dangerous to the dwellers in the neighbouring plains, existed at some miles' distance, and caused earthquakes, or perhaps I should more properly say disturbances of the surface, which threatened occasionally to perturb the observations. But the Martialists grudge no cost to render their scientific instruments, from the Observatory itself to the smallest lens or wheel it contains, as perfect as possible. Having decided that Ranelca was very superior to any other available site, they were not to be baffled or diverted by such a trifle as the opposition of Nature. Still less would they allow that the observers should be put out by a perceptible disturbance, or their observations falsified by one too slight to be realised by their senses. If Nature were impertinent enough to interfere with the arrangements of science, science must put down the mutiny of Nature. As seas had been bridged and continents cut through, so a volcano might and must be suppressed or extinguished. A tunnel thirty miles in length was cut from a great lake nearly a thousand feet higher than the base of the volcano; and through this for a quarter of a year, say some six Terrestrial months, water was steadily poured into the subterrene cavities wherein the eruptive forces were generated—the plutonic laboratory of the rebellious agency. Of course previous to the adoption of this

measure, the crust in the neighbourhood had been carefully explored and tested by various wonderfully elaborate and perfect boring instruments, and a map or rather model of the strata for a mile below the surface, and for a distance around the volcano which I dare not state on the faith of my recollection alone, had been constructed on a scale, as we should say, of twelve inches to the mile. Except for minor purposes, for convenience of pocket carriage and the like, Martialists disdain so poor a representation as a flat map can give of a broken surface. On the small scale, they employ globes or spherical sections to represent extensive portions of their world; on the large scale (from two to twenty-four inches per mile), models of wonderfully accurate construction. Consequently, children understand and enjoy the geographical lesson which in European schools costs so many tears to so little purpose. A girl of six years knows more perfectly the whole area of the Martial globe than a German Professor that of the ancient Peloponnesus. Eivé, the dunce of our household, won a Terrestrial picture-book on which she had set her fancy by tracing on a forty-inch globe, the first time she saw it, every detail of my journey from Ecasfe as she had heard me relate it; and Eunane, who had never left her Nursery, could describe beforehand any route I wished to take between the northern and southern ice-belts. Under the guidance afforded by the elaborate model abovementioned, all the hollows wherein the materials of eruption were stored, and wherein the chemical forces of Nature had been at work for ages, were thoroughly flooded. Of course convulsion after convulsion of the most violent nature

followed. But in the course of about two hundred days, the internal combustion was overmastered for lack of fuel; the chemical combinations, which might have gone on for ages causing weak but incessant outbreaks, were completed and their power exhausted.

This source of disturbance extinguished in the reign of the twenty-fifth predecessor of my royal patron, the construction of the great Observatory on Ranelca was commenced. A very elaborate road, winding round and round the mountain at such an incline as to be easily ascended by the electric carriages, was built. But this was intended only as a subsidiary means of ascent. Right into the bowels of the mountain a vast tunnel fifty feet in height was driven. At its inner extremity was excavated a chamber whose dimensions are imperfectly recorded in my notes, but which was certainly much larger than the central cavern from which radiate the principal galleries of the Mammoth Cave. Around this were pierced a dozen shafts, emerging at different heights, but all near the summit, and all so far outside the central plateau as to leave the solid foundation on which the Observatory was to rest, down to the very centre of the planet, wholly undisturbed. Through each of these, ascending and descending alternately, pass two cars, or rather movable chambers, worked by electricity, conveying passengers, instruments, or supplies to and from the most convenient points in the vast structure of the Observatory itself. The highest part of Ranelca was a rocky mass of some 1600 feet in circumference and about 200 in height. This was carved into a perfect octagon, in the sides of which were arranged a number of minor chambers—among them those wherein transit and other

secondary observations were to be taken, and in which minor magnifying instruments were placed to scan their several portions of the heavens. Within these was excavated a circular central chamber, the dome of which was constructed of a crystal so clear that I verily believe the most exacting of Terrestrial astronomers would have been satisfied to make his observations through it. But an opening was made in this dome, as for the mounting of one of our equatorial telescopes, and machinery was provided which caused the roof to revolve with a touch, bringing the opening to bear on any desired part of the celestial vault. In the centre of the solid floor, levelled to the utmost perfection, was left a circular pillar supporting the polar axis of an instrument widely differing from our telescopes, especially in the fact that it had no opaque tube connecting the essential lenses which we call the eye-piece and the object-glass, names not applicable to their Martial substitutes. On my visit to the Observatory, however, I had not leisure to examine minutely the means by which the images of stars and planets were produced. I reserved this examination for a second opportunity, which, as it happened, never occurred.

On this occasion Eveena and Eunane were with me, and the astronomic pictures which were to be presented to us, and which they could enjoy and understand almost as fully as myself, sufficiently occupied our time. Warned to stand at such a distance from the central machinery that in a whole revolution no part of it could by any possibility touch us, we were placed near an opening looking into a dark chamber, with our backs to the objects of observation. In this chamber,

not upon a screen but suspended in the air, presently appeared an image several thousand times larger than that of the crescent Moon as seen through a tube small enough to correct the exaggeration of visual instinct. It appeared, however, not flat, as does the Moon to the naked eye, but evidently as part of a sphere. At some distance was shown another crescent, belonging to a sphere whose diameter was a little more than one-fourth that of the former. The light reflected from their surfaces was of silver radiance, rather than the golden hue of the Moon or of Venus as seen through a small telescope. The smaller crescent I could recognise at once as belonging to our own satellite; the larger was, of course, the world I had quitted. So exactly is the clockwork or its substitute adapted to counteract both the rotation and revolution of Mars, that the two images underwent no other change of place than that caused by their own proper motion in space; a movement which, notwithstanding the immense magnifying power employed, was of course scarcely perceptible. But the rotation of the larger sphere was visible as we watched it. It so happened that the part which was at once lighted by the rays of the Sun and exposed to our observation was but little clouded. The atmosphere, of course, prevented its presenting the clear, sharply-defined outlines of lunar landscapes; but sea and land, ice and snow, were so clearly defined and easily distinguishable that my companions exclaimed with eagerness, as they observed features unmistakably resembling on the grand scale those with which they were themselves familiar. The Arctic ice was scarcely visible in the North. The vast steppes of Russia, the boundary line of the Ural mountains, the

greyish-blue of the Euxine, Western Asia, Arabia, and the Red Sea joining the long water-line of the Southern Ocean, were defined by the slanting rays. The Antarctic ice-continent was almost equally clear, with its stupendous glacier masses radiating apparently from an elevated extensive land, chiefly consisting of a deeply scooped and scored plateau of rock, around the Pole itself. The terminator, or boundary between light and shade, was not, as in the Moon, pretty sharply defined, and broken only by the mountainous masses, rings, and sea-beds, if such they are, so characteristic of the latter. On the image of the Moon there intervened between bright light and utter darkness but the narrow belt to which only part of the Sun was as yet visible, and which, therefore, received comparatively few rays. The twilight to north and south extended on the image of the Earth deep into that part on which as yet the Sun was below the horizon, and consequently daylight faded into darkness all but imperceptibly, save between the tropics. We watched long and intently as league by league new portions of Europe and Africa, the Mediterranean, and even the Baltic, came into view; and I was able to point out to Eveena lands in which I had travelled, seas I had crossed, and even the isles of the Ægean, and bays in which my vessel had lain at anchor. This personal introduction to each part of the image, now presented to her for the first time, enabled her to realise more forcibly than a lengthened experience of astronomical observation might have done the likeness to her own world of that which was passing under her eyes; and at once intensified her wonder, heightened

her pleasure, and sharpened her intellectual apprehension of the scene.

When we had satiated our eyes with this spectacle, or rather when I remembered that we could spare no more time to this, the most interesting exhibition of the evening, a turn of the machinery brought Venus under view. Here, however, the cloud envelope baffled us altogether, and her close approach to the horizon soon obliged the director to turn his apparatus in another direction. Two or three of the Asteroids were in view. Pallas especially presented a very interesting spectacle. Not that the difference of distance would have rendered the definition much more perfect than from a Terrestrial standpoint, but that the marvellous perfection of *Martial* instruments, and in some measure also the rarity of the atmosphere at such a height, rendered possible the use of far higher magnifying powers than our astronomers can employ. I am inclined to agree, from what I saw on this occasion, with those who imagine the Asteroids to be—if not fragments of a broken planet which once existed as a whole—yet in another sense fragmentary spheres, less perfect and with surfaces of much greater proportionate irregularity than those of the larger planets. Next was presented to our view on a somewhat smaller scale, because the area of the chamber employed would not otherwise have given room for the system, the enormous disc and the four satellites of Jupiter. The difference between 400 and 360 millions of miles' distance is, of course, wholly unimportant; but the definition and enlargement were such that the image was perfect, and the details minute and distinct,

beyond anything that Earthly observation had led me to conceive as possible. The satellites were no longer mere points or tiny discs, but distinct moons, with surfaces marked like that of our own satellite, though far less mountainous and broken, and, as it seemed to me, possessing a distinct atmosphere. I am not sure that there is not a visible difference of brightness among them, not due to their size but to some difference in the reflecting power of their surfaces, since the distance of all from the Sun is practically equal. That Jupiter gives out some light of his own, a portion of which they may possibly reflect in differing amount according to their varying distance, is believed by Martial astronomers; and I thought it not improbable. The brilliant and various colouring of the bands which cross the face of the giant planet was wonderfully brought out; the bluish-grey around the poles, the clear yellowish-white light of the light bands, probably belts of white cloud, contrasted signally the hues—varying from deep orange-brown to what was almost crimson or rose-pink on the one hand and bright yellow on the other—of different zones of the so-called dark belts. On the latter, markings and streaks of strange variety suggested, if they failed to prove, the existence of frequent spiral storms, disturbing, probably at an immense height above the surface, clouds which must be utterly unlike the clouds of Mars or the Earth in material as well as in form and mass. These markings enabled us to follow with clear ocular appreciation the rapid rotation of this planet. In the course of half-an-hour several distinct spots on different belts had moved in a direct line

across a tenth of the face presented to us—a distance, upon the scale of the gigantic image, so great that the motion required no painstaking observation, but forced itself upon the notice of the least attentive spectator. The belief of Martial astronomers is that Jupiter is not by any means so much less dense than the minor planets as his proportionately lesser weight would imply. They hold that his visible surface is that of an enormously deep atmosphere, within which lies, they suppose, a central ball, not merely hot but more than white hot, and probably, from its temperature, not yet possessing a solid crust. One writer argues that, since all worlds must by analogy be supposed to be inhabited, and since the satellites of Jupiter more resemble worlds than the planet itself, which may be regarded as a kind of secondary sun, it is not improbable that the former are the scenes of life as varied as that of Mars itself; and that infinite ages hence, when these have become too cold for habitation, their giant primary may have gone through those processes which, according to the received theory, have fitted the interior planets to be the home of plants, animals, and, in two cases at least, of human beings.

It was near midnight before the manifest fatigue of the ladies overcame my selfish desire to prolong as much as possible this most interesting visit. Meteorological science in Mars has been carried to high perfection; and the director warned me that but three or four equally favourable opportunities might offer in the course of the next half year.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHARACTERISTICS.

Time passed on, marked by no very important incident, while I made acquaintance with manners and with men around me, neither one nor the other worth further description. Nothing occurred to confirm the alarms Davilo constantly repeated.

I called the ladies one day into the outer grounds to see a new carriage, capable, according to its arrangement, of containing from two to eight persons, and a balloon of great size and new construction which Davilo had urgently counselled me to procure, as capable of sudden use in some of those daily thickening perils, of which I could see no other sign than occasional evidence that my steps were watched and dogged. Both vehicles enlisted the interest and curiosity of Eunane and her companions. Eveena, after examining with as much attention as was due to the trouble I took to explain it, the construction of the carriage, concentrated her interest and observation upon the balloon, the sight of which evidently impressed her. When we had returned to the peristyle, and the rest had dispersed, I said—

“I see you apprehend some part of my reasons for

purchasing the balloon. The carriage will take us to-morrow to Altasfe (a town some ten miles distant). 'Shopping' is an amusement so gratifying to all women on Earth, from the veiled favourites of an Eastern seraglio to the very unveiled dames of Western ball-rooms, that I suppose the instinct must be native to the sex wherever women and trade co-exist. If you have a single feminine folly, you will enjoy this more than you will own. If you are, as they complain, absolutely faultless, you will enjoy with me the pleasure of the girls in plaguing one after another all the traders of Altasfe:" and with these words I placed in her hands a packet of the thin metallic plates constituting their currency. Her extreme and unaffected surprise was amusing to witness.

"What am I to do with this?" she inquired, counting carefully the uncounted pile, in a manner which at once dispelled my impression that her surprise was due to childish ignorance of its value.

"Whatever you please, Madonna; whatever can please you and the others."

"But," she remonstrated, "this is more than all our dowries for another year to come; and—forgive me for repeating what you seem purposely to forget—I cannot cast the shadow between my equals and the master. Would you so mortify *me* as to make me take from Eunane's hand, for example, what should come from yours?"

"You are right, Madonna, now as always," I owned; wincing at the name she used, invariably employed by the others, but one I never endured from her. Her looks entreated pardon for the form of the implied

reproof, as I resumed the larger part of the money she held out to me, forcing back the smaller into her reluctant hands. "But what has the amount of your dowries to do with the matter? The contracts are meant, I suppose, to secure the least to which a wife has a right, not to fix her natural share in her husband's wealth. You need not fear, Eveena; the Prince has made us rich enough to spend more than we shall care for."

"I don't understand you," she replied with her usual gentle frankness and simple logical consistency. "It pleases you to say 'we' and 'ours' whenever you can so seem to make me part of yourself; and I love to hear you, for it assures me each time that you still hold me tightly as I cling to you. But you know those are only words of kindness. Since you returned my father's gift, the dowry you then doubled is my only share of what is yours, and it is more than enough."

"Do you mean that women expect and receive no more: that they do not naturally share in a man's surplus wealth?"

While I spoke Enva had joined us, and, resting on the cushions at my feet, looked curiously at the metallic notes in Eveena's hand.

"You do not," returned the latter, "pay more for what you have purchased because you have grown richer. You do not share your wealth even with those on whose care it chiefly depends."

"Yes, I do, Eveena. But I know what you mean. Their share is settled and is not increased. But you will not tell me that this affords any standard for household dealings; that a wife's share in her husband's

fortune is really bounded by the terms of the marriage contract?"

"Will you let Enva answer you?" asked Eveena. "She looks more ready than I feel to reply."

This little incident was characteristic in more ways than one. Eveena's feelings, growing out of the realities of our relation, were at issue with and perplexed her convictions founded on the theory and practice of her world. Not yet doubting the justice of the latter, she instinctively shrank from their application to ourselves. She was glad, therefore, to let Enva state plainly and directly a doctrine which, from her own lips, would have pained as well as startled me. On her side, Enva, though encouraged to bear her part in conversation, was too thoroughly imbued with the same ideas to interpose unbidden. As she would have said, a wife deserved the scandal for speaking without leave; nor—experience notwithstanding—would she think it safe to interrupt in my presence a favourite so pointedly honoured as Eveena. She waited, therefore, till my eyes gave the permission which hers had asked.

"Why should you buy anything twice over, Clafempta, whether it be a wife or an amba? A girl sells her society for the best price her attractions will command. These attractions seldom increase. You cannot give her less because you care less for them; but how can she expect more?"

"I know, Enva, that the marriage contract here is an open bargain and sale, as among my race it is generally a veiled one. But, the bargain made, does it really govern the after relation? Do men really spend

their wealth wholly on themselves, and take no pleasure in the pleasure of women?"

"Generally, I believe," Enva replied, "they fancy they have paid too much for their toy before they have possessed it long, and had rather buy a new one than make much of those they have. Wives seldom look on the increase of a man's wealth as a gain to themselves. Of course you like to see us prettily dressed, while you think us worth looking at in ourselves. But as a rule our own income provides for that; and *we* at any rate are better off than almost any women outside the Palace. The Prince did not care, and knew it would not matter to you, what he gave to make his gift worthy of him and agreeable to you. Perhaps," she added, "he wished to make it secure by offering terms too good to be thrown away by any foolish rebellion against a heavier hand or a worse temper than usual. You hardly understand yet half the advantages you possess."

The latent sarcasm of the last remark did not need the look of pretended fear that pointed it. If Enva professed to resent my inadequate appreciation of the splendid beauty bestowed on me by the royal favour more than any possible ill-usage for which she supposed herself compensated in advance, it was not for me to put her sincerity to proof.

"Once bought, then, wives are not worth pleasing? It is not worth while to purchase happy faces, bright smiles, and willing kisses now and then at a cost the giver can scarcely feel?"

Enva's look now was half malicious, half kindly, and wholly comical; but she answered gravely, with a slight imitation of my own tone—

"Can you not imagine, or make Eveena tell you, Clafsempta, why women once purchased think it best to give smiles and kisses freely to one who can command their tears? Or do you fancy that their smiles are more loyal and sincere when won by kindness than . . ."

"By fear? Sweeter, Enva, at any rate. Well, if I do not offend your feelings, I need not hesitate to disregard another of your customs."

She received her share willingly and gratefully enough, but her smile and kiss were so evidently given to order, that they only testified to the thorough literality of her statement. Leenoo, Eirale, and Elfe followed her example with characteristic exactness. Equally characteristic was the conduct of the others. Eunane kept aloof till called, and then approached with an air of sullen reluctance, as if summoned to receive a reprimand rather than a favour. Not a little amused, I affected displeasure in my turn, till the window of her chamber closed behind us, and her ill-humour was forgotten in wondering alarm. Offered in private, the kiss and smile given and not demanded, the present was accepted with frank affectionate gratitude. Eivé took her share in pettish shyness, waiting the moment when she might mingle unobserved with her childlike caresses the childish reproach—

"If you can buy kisses, Clafsempta, you don't want mine. And if you fancy I sell them, you shall have no more."

I saw Davilo in the morning before we started. After some conversation on business, he said—

"And pardon a suggestion which I make, not as in

charge of your affairs, but as responsible to our supreme authority for your safety. No correspondence should pass from your household unscrutinised; and if there be such correspondence, I must ask you to place in my hand, for the purpose of our quest, not any message, but some of the slips on which messages have been written. This may probably furnish precisely that tangible means of relation with some one acquainted with the conspiracy for which we have sought in vain."

My unwillingness to meddle with feminine correspondence was the less intelligible to him that, as the master alone commands the household telegraph, he knew that it must have passed through my hands. I yielded at last to his repeated urgency that a life more precious than mine was involved in any danger to myself, so far as to promise the slips required, to furnish a possible means of *rappport* between the *clairvoyante* and the enemy.

I returned to the house in grave thought. Eunane corresponded by the telegraph with some schoolmates; Eivé, I fancied, with three or four of those ladies with whom, accompanying me on my visits, she had made acquaintance. But I hated the very thought of domestic suspicion, and, adhering to my original resolve, refused to entertain a distrust that seemed ill-founded and far-fetched. If there had been treachery, it would be impossible to obtain any letters that might have been preserved without resorting to a compulsion which, since both Eunane and Eivé had written in the knowledge that their letters passed unread, would seem like a breach of faith. I asked, however, simply, and giving no reason, for the production of any papers received

and preserved by either. Eivé, with her usual air of simplicity, brought me the two or three which, she said, were all she had kept. Eunane replied with a petulance almost amounting to refusal, which to some might have suggested suspicion; but which to me seemed the very last course that a culprit would have pursued. To give needless offence while conscious of guilt would have been the very wantonness of reckless temper.

"Bite your tongue, and keep your letters," I said sharply.

Turning to Eivé and looking at the addresses of hers, none of which bore the name of any one who could be suspected of the remotest connection with a political plot—

"Give me which of these you please," I said, taking from her hand that which she selected and marking it. "Now erase the writing yourself and give me the paper."

This incident gave Eunane leisure to recover her temper. She stood for a few moments ashamed perhaps, but, as usual, resolute to abide by the consequences of a fault. When she found that my last word was spoken, her mood changed at once.

"I did not quite like to give you Velna's letters. They are foolish, like mine; and besides—— But I never supposed you would let me refuse. What you won't make me do, I must do of my own accord."

Womanly reasoning, most unlike "woman's reasons!" She brought, with unaffected alacrity, a collection of tafroo-slips whose addresses bore out her account of their character. Taking the last from the bundle, I bade her erase its contents.

"No," she said, "that is the one I least liked to

show. If you will not read it, please follow my hand as I read, and see for yourself how far I have misused your trust."

"I never doubted your good faith, Eunane"— But she had begun to read, pointing with her finger as she went on. At one sentence hand and voice wavered a little without apparent reason. "I shall," wrote her school-friend, some half year her junior, "make my appearance at the next inspection. "I wish the Camptâ had left you here till now; we might perhaps have contrived to pass into the same household."

"A very innocent wish, and very natural," I said, in answer to the look, half inquiring, half shy, with which Eunane watched the effect of her words. I could not now use the precaution in her case, which it had somehow seemed natural to adopt with Eive, of marking the paper returned for erasure. On her part, Eunane thrust into my hand the whole bundle as they were, and I was forced myself to erase, by an electro-chemical process which leaves no trace of writing, the words of that selected. The absence of any mark on the second paper served sufficiently to distinguish the two when, of course without stating from whom I received them, I placed them in Davilo's hands.

When we were ready to leave the peristyle for the carriage, I observed that Eunane alone was still unveiled, while the others wore their cloaks of down and the thick veils, without which no lady may present herself to the public eye.

"'Thieving time is woman's crime,'" I said, quoting a domestic proverb. "In another household you would be left behind."

"Of course," she replied, such summary discipline seeming to her as appropriate as to an European child. "I don't like always to deserve the vine and receive the nuts."

"You must take which *I* like," I retorted, laughing. Satisfied or silenced, she hastened to dress, and enjoyed with unalloyed delight the unusual pleasure of inspecting dresses and jewellery, and making more purchases in a day than she had expected to be able to do in two years. But she and her companions acted with more consideration than ladies permitted to visit the shops of Europe show for their masculine escort. Eivé alone, on this as on other occasions, availed herself thoroughly of those privileges of childhood which I had always extended to her.

So quick are the proceedings and so excellent the arrangements of Martial commerce, even where ladies are concerned, that a couple of hours saw us on our way homeward, after having passed through the apartments of half the merchants in Altasfe. Purposely for my own pleasure, as well as for that of my companions, I took a circuitous route homeward, and in so doing came within sight of a principal feminine Nursery or girls' school. Recognising it, Eunane spoke with some eagerness—

"Ah! I spent nine years there, and not always unhappily."

Eveena, who sat beside me, pressed my hand, with an intention easily understood.

"And you would like to see it again?" I inquired in compliance with her silent hint.

"Not to go back," said Eunane. "But I should like to pay it a visit, if it were possible."

"Can we?" I asked Eveena.

"I think so," she answered. "I observe half a dozen people have gone in since we came in sight, and I fancy it is inspection day there."

"Inspection?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied in a tone of some little annoyance and discomfort. "The girls who have completed their tenth year, and who are thought to have as good a chance now as they would have later, are dressed for the first time in the white robe and veil of maidenhood, and presented in the public chamber to attract the choice of those who are looking for brides."

"Not a pleasant spectacle," I said, "to you or to myself; but it will hardly annoy the others, and Eunane shall have her wish."

We descended from our carriage at the gate, and entered the grounds of the Nursery. Studiously as the health, the diet, and the exercise of the inmates are cared for, nothing is done to render the appearance of the home where they pass so large and critical a portion of their lives cheerful or attractive in appearance. Utility alone is studied; how much beauty conduces to utility where the happiness and health of children are concerned, Martial science has yet to learn. The grounds contained no flowers and but few trees; the latter ruined in point of form and natural grace to render them convenient supports for gymnastic apparatus. A number of the younger girls, unveiled, but dressed in a dark plain garment reaching from the throat to the knees, with trousers giving free play to the limbs, were

exercising on the different swings and bars, flinging the light weights and balls, or handling the substitutes for dumb-bells, the use of which forms an important branch of their education. Others, relieved from this essential part of their tasks, were engaged in various sports. One of these I noticed especially. Perhaps a hundred young ladies on either side formed a sort of battalion, contending for the ground they occupied with light shields of closely woven wire and masks of the same material, and with spears consisting of a reed or grass about five feet in length, and exceedingly light. When perfectly ripened, these spears are exceeding formidable, their points being sharp enough to pierce the skin of any but a pachydermatous animal. Those employed in these games, however, are gathered while yet covered by a sheath, which, as they ripen, bursts and leaves the keen, hard point exposed. Considerable care is taken in their selection, since, if nearly ripe, or if they should ripen prematurely under the heat of the sun when severed from the stem, the sheath bursting in the middle of a game, very grave accidents might occur. The movements of the girls were so ordered that the game appeared almost as much a dance as a conflict; but though there was nothing of unseemly violence, the victory was evidently contested with real earnestness, and with a skill superior to that displayed in the movements of the actual soldiers who have long since exchanged the tasks of warfare for the duties of policemen, escorts, and sentries. I held Eveena's hand, the others followed us closely, venturing neither to break from our party without leave nor to ask permission, till, at Eveena's suggestion, it was spontaneously given. They

then quitted us, hastening, Eunane to seek out her favourite companions of a former season, the others to mingle with the younger girls and share in their play. We walked on slowly, stopping from time to time to watch the exercises and sports of the younger portion of a community numbering some fifteen hundred girls. When we entered the hall we were rejoined by Eunane, with one of her friends who still wore the ordinary school costume. Conversation with or notice of a young lady so dressed was not only not expected but disallowed, and the pair seated themselves behind us and studiously out of hearing of any conversation conducted in a low tone.

The spectacle, as I had anticipated, was to me anything but pleasant. It reminded me of a slave-market of the East, however, rather than of the more revolting features of a slave auction in the United States. The maidens, most of them very graceful and more than pretty, their robes arranged and ornamented with an evident care to set off their persons to the best advantage, and with a skill much greater than they themselves could yet have acquired, were seated alone or by twos and threes in different parts of the hall, grouped so as to produce the most attractive general as well as individual effect. The picture, therefore, was a pretty one; and since the intending purchasers addressed the objects of their curiosity or admiration with courtesy and fairly decorous reserve, it was the known character rather than any visible incident of the scene that rendered it repugnant or revolting in my eyes. I need not say that, except Eveena, there was no one of either sex in the hall who shared my feeling. After all, the purpose was but frankly avowed, and certainly carried

out more safely and decorously than in the ball-rooms and drawing-rooms of London or Paris. Of the maidens, some seemed shy and backward, and most were silent save when addressed. But the majority received their suitors with a thoroughly business-like air, and listened to the terms offered them, or endeavoured to exact a higher price or a briefer period of assured slavery, with a self-possession more reasonable than agreeable to witness. One maiden seated in our immediate vicinity was, I perceived, the object of Eveena's especial interest, and, at first on this account alone, attracted my observation. Dressed with somewhat less ostentatious care and elegance than her companions, her veil and the skirt of her robe were so arranged as to show less of her personal attractions than they generally displayed. A first glance hardly did justice to a countenance which, if not signally pretty, and certainly marked by a beauty less striking than that of most of the others, was modest and pleasing; a figure slight and graceful, with hands and feet yet smaller than usual, even among a race the shape of whose limbs is, with few exceptions, admirable. Very few had addressed her, or even looked at her; and a certain resigned mortification was visible in her countenance.

"You are sorry for that child?" I said to Eveena.

"Yes," she answered. "It must be distressing to feel herself the least attractive, the least noticed among her companions, and on such an occasion. I cannot conceive how I could bear to form part of such a spectacle; but if I were in her place, I suppose I should be hurt and humbled at finding that nobody cared to

look at me in the presence of others prettier and better dressed than myself."

"Well," I said, "of all the faces I see I like that the best. I suppose I must not speak to her?"

"Why not?" said Eveena in surprise. "You are not bound to purchase her, any more than we bought all we looked at to-day."

"It did not occur to me," I replied, "that I could be regarded as a possible suitor, nor do I think I could find courage to present myself to that young lady in a manner which must cause her to look upon me in that light. Ask Eunane if she knows her."

Here Eivé and the others joined us and took their places on my right. Eveena, leaving her seat for a moment, spoke apart with Eunane.

"Will you speak to her?" she said, returning. "She is Eunane's friend and correspondent, Velna; and I think they are really fond of each other. It is a pity that if she is to undergo the mortification of remaining unchosen and going back to her tasks, at least till the next inspection, she will also be separated finally from the only person for whom she seems to have had anything like home affection."

"Well, if I am to talk to her," I replied, "you must be good enough to accompany me. I do not feel that I could venture on such an enterprise by myself."

Eveena's eyes, even through her veil, expressed at once amusement and surprise; but as she rose to accompany me this expression faded and a look of graver interest replaced it. Many turned to observe us as we crossed the short space that separated us from the isolated and neglected maiden. I had seen, if I had

not noticed, that in no case were the men, as they made the tour of the room or went up to any lady who might have attracted their special notice, accompanied by the women of their households. A few of these, however, sat watching the scene, their mortification, curiosity, jealousy, or whatever feeling it might excite, being of course concealed by the veils that hid every feature but the eyes, which now and then followed very closely the footsteps of their lords. The object of our attention showed marked surprise as we approached her, and yet more when, seeing that I was at a loss for words, Eveena herself spoke a kindly and gracious sentence. The girl's voice was soft and low, and her tone and words, as we gradually fell into a hesitating and broken conversation, confirmed the impression made by her appearance. When, after a few minutes, I moved to depart, there was in Eveena's reluctant steps and expressive upturned eyes a meaning I could not understand. As soon as we were out of hearing, moving so as partly to hide my countenance and entirely to conceal her own gesture from the object of her compassion, she checked my steps by a gentle pressure on my arm and looked up earnestly into my face.

"What is it?" I asked. "You seem to have some wish that I cannot conjecture; and you can trust by this time my anxiety to gratify every desire of yours, reasonable or not—if indeed you ever were unreasonable."

"She is so sad, so lonely," Eveena answered, "and she is so fond of Eunane."

"You don't mean that you want me to make her an offer!" I exclaimed in extreme amazement.

"Do not be angry," pleaded Eveena. "She would

be glad to accept any offer you would be likely to make; and the money you gave me yesterday would have paid all she would cost you for many years. Besides, it would please Eunane, and it would make Velna so happy."

"You must know far better than I can what is likely to make her happy," I replied. "Strange to the ideas and customs of your world, I cannot conceive that a woman can wish to take the last place in a household like ours rather than the first or only one with the poorest of her people."

"She will hardly have the choice," Eveena answered. "Those whom you can call poor mostly wait till they can have their choice before they marry; and if taken by some one who could not afford a more expensive choice, she would only be neglected, or dismissed ill provided for, as soon as he could purchase one more to his taste."

"If," I rejoined at last, "you think it a kindness to her, and are sure she will so think it; if you wish it, and will avouch her contentment with a place in the household of one who does not desire her, I will comply with this as with any wish of yours. But it is not to my mind to take a wife out of mere compassion, as I might readily adopt a child."

Once more, with all our mutual affection and appreciation of each other's character, Eveena and I were far as the Poles apart in thought if not in feeling. It was as impossible for her to emancipate herself utterly from the ideas and habits of her own world, as for me to reconcile myself to them. I led her back at last to her seat, and beckoned Eunane to my side.

"Eveena," I said, "has been urging me to offer your friend yonder a place in our household."

Though I could not see her face, the instant change in her attitude, the eager movement of her hands, and the elastic spring that suddenly braced her form, expressed her feeling plainly enough.

"It must be done, I suppose," I murmured rather to myself than to them, as Eunane timidly put out her hand and gratefully clasped Eveena's. "Well, it is to be done for you, and you must do it."

"How can I?" exclaimed Eunane in astonishment; and Eveena added, "It is for you; you only can name your terms, and it would be a strange slight to her to do so through us."

"I cannot help that. I will not 'act the lie' by affecting any personal desire to win her, and I could not tell her the truth. Offer her the same terms that contented the rest; nay, if she enters my household, she shall not feel herself in a secondary or inferior position."

This condition surprised even Eveena as much as my resolve to make her the bearer of the proposal that was in truth her own. But, however reluctant, she would as soon have refused obedience to my request as have withheld a kindness because it cost her an unexpected trial. Taking Eunane with her, she approached and addressed the girl. Whatever my own doubt as to her probable reception, however absurd in my own estimation the thing I was induced to do, there was no corresponding consciousness, no feeling but one of surprise and gratification, in the face on which I turned my eyes. There was a short and earnest debate; but, as I afterwards learned, it arose simply from the girl's astonish-

ment at terms which, extravagant even for the beauties of the day, were thrice as liberal as she had ventured to dream of. Eveena and Eunane were as well aware of this as herself; the right of beauty to a special price seemed to them as obvious as in Western Europe seems the right of rank to exorbitant settlements; but they felt it as impossible to argue the point as a solicitor would find it unsafe to expound to a *gentleman* the different cost of honouring Mademoiselle with his hand and being honoured with that of Milady. Velna's remonstrances were suppressed; she rose, and, accompanied by Eveena and Eunane, approached a desk in one corner of the room, occupied by a lady past middle life. The latter, like all those of her sex who have adopted masculine independence and a professional career, wore no veil over her face, and in lieu of the feminine head-dress a band of metal around the head, depending from which a short fall of silken texture drawn back behind the ears covered the neck and upper edge of the dark robe. This lady took from a heap by her side a slip containing the usual form of marriage contract, and filled in the blanks. At a sign from Eveena, I had by this time approached close enough to hear the language of half-envious, half-supercilious wonder in which the schoolmistress congratulated her pupil on her signal conquest, and the terms she had obtained, as well as the maiden's unaffected acknowledgment of her own surprise and conscious unworthiness. I could *feel*, despite the concealment of her form and face, Eveena's silent expression of pained disgust with the one, and earnest womanly sympathy with the other. The document was executed in the usual trip-

licate. The girl retired for a few minutes, and reappeared in a cloak and veil like those of her new companions, but of comparatively cheap materials. As we passed the threshold, Eveena gently and tacitly but decisively assigned to her *protégée* her own place beside me, and put her right hand in my left. The agitation with which it manifestly trembled, though neither strange nor unpleasing, added to the extreme embarrassment I felt; and I had placed her next to Eunane in the carriage and taken my seat beside Eveena, whom I never permitted to resign her own, before a single spoken word had passed in this extraordinary courtship, or sanctioned the brief and practical ceremony of marriage.

I was alone in my own room that evening when a gentle scratching on the window-crystal entreated admission. I answered without looking up, assuming that Eveena alone would seek me there. But hers were not the lips that were earnestly pressed on my hand, nor hers the voice that spoke, trembling and hesitating with stronger feeling than it could utter in words—

“I do thank you from my heart. I little thought you would wish to make me so happy. I shrank from showing you the letter lest you should think I dared to hope. . . . It is not only Velna; it is such strange joy and comfort to be held fast by one who *cares*—to feel safe in hands as kind as they are strong. You said you could love none save Eveena; but, Clafsempta, your way of *not* loving is something better, gentler, more considerate than any love I ever hoped or heard of.”

I could read only profound sincerity and passionate gratitude in the clear bright eyes, softened by half-suppressed tears, that looked up from where she knelt

beside me. But the exaggeration was painfully suggestive, confirming the ugly view Enva had given yesterday of the life that seemed natural and reasonable to her race, and made ordinary human kindness appear something strange and romantic by contrast.

"Surely, Eunane, every man wishes those around him happy, if it do not cost too much to make them so?"

"No, indeed! Oftener the master finds pleasure in punishing and humiliating, the favourite in witnessing her companions' tears and terror. They like to see the household grateful for an hour's amusement, crouching to caprice, incredulously thankful for barest justice. One book much read in our schools says that 'cruelty is a stronger, earlier, and more tenacious human instinct than sympathy;' and another that 'half the pleasure of power lies in giving pain, and half the remainder in being praised for sparing it.' . . . But that was not all: Eveena was as eager to be kind as you were."

"Much more so, Eunane."

"Perhaps. What seemed natural to her was strange to you. But it was *your* thought to put Velna on equal terms with us; taking her out of mere kindness, to give her the dowry of a Prince's favourite. *That* surprised Eveena, and it puzzled me. But I think I half understand you now, and if I do . . . When Eveena told us how you saved her and defied the Regent, and Eivé asked you about it, you said so quietly, 'There are some things a man cannot do.' Is buying a girl cheap, because she is not a beauty, one of those things?"

"To take any advantage of her misfortune—to make her feel it in my conduct—to give her a place in my household on other terms than her equals—to show her

less consideration or courtesy than one would give to a girl as beautiful as yourself—yes, Eunane! To my eyes, your friend is pleasant and pretty; but if not, would you have liked to feel that she was of less account here than yourself, because she has not such splendid beauty as yours?”

Eunane was too frank to conceal her gratification in this first acknowledgment of her charms, as she had shown her mortification while it was withheld—not, certainly, because undeserved. Her eyes brightened and her colour deepened in manifest pleasure. But she was equally frank in her answer to the implied compliment to her generosity, of whose justice she was not so well assured.

“I am afraid I should half have liked it, a year ago. Now, after I have lived so long with you and Eveena, I should be shamed by it! But, Clafempta, the things ‘a man cannot do’ are the things men do every day;—and women every hour!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

WINTER.

HITHERTO I had experienced only the tropical climate of Mars, with the exception of the short time spent in the northern temperate zone about the height of its summer. I was anxious, of course, to see something also of its winter, and an opportunity presented itself. No institution was more obviously worth a visit than the great University or principal place of highest education in this world, and I was invited thither in the middle of the local winter. To this University many of the most promising youths, especially those intended for any of the Martial professions—architects, artists, rulers, lawyers, physicians, and so forth—are often sent directly from the schools, or after a short period of training in the higher colleges. It is situate far within the north temperate zone on the shore of one of the longest and narrowest of the great Martial gulfs, which extends from north-eastward to south-west, and stretches from 43° N. to 10° S. latitude. The University in question is situate nearly at the extremity of the northern branch of this gulf, which splits into two about 300 miles from its end, a canal of course connecting it with the nearest sea-belt. I chose to perform this journey by land, following the line of the great road from

Amacasfe to Qualveskinta for about 800 miles, and then turning directly northward. I did not suppose that I should find a willing companion on this journey, and was myself wishful to be alone, since I dared not, in her present state of health, expose Eveena to the fatigue and hardship of prolonged winter travelling by land. To my surprise, however, all the rest, when aware that I had declined to take her, were eager to accompany me. Chiefly to take her out of the way, and certainly with no idea of finding pleasure in her society, I selected Enva; next to Leenoo the most malicious of the party, and gifted with sufficient intelligence to render her malice more effective than Leenoo's stupidity could be. Enva, moreover, with the vigorous youthful vitality so often found on Earth in women of her light Northern complexion, seemed less likely to suffer from the severity of the weather or the fatigue of a land journey than most of her companions. When I spoke of my intention to Davilo, I was surprised to find that he considered even feminine company a protection.

"Any attempt upon you," he said, "must either involve your companion, for which there can be no legal excuse preferred, or else expose the assailant to the risk of being identified through her evidence."

I started accordingly a few days before the winter solstice of the North, reaching the great road a few miles from the point at which it crosses another of the great gulfs running due north and south, at its narrowest point in latitude 3° S. At this point the inlet is no more than twenty miles wide, and its banks about a hundred feet in height. At this level and across this

vast space was carried a bridge, supported by arches, and resting on pillars deeply imbedded in the submarine rock at a depth about equal to the height of the land on either side. The Martial seas are for the most part shallow, the landlocked gulfs being seldom 100 fathoms, and the deepest ocean soundings giving less than 1000. The vast and solid structure looked as light and airy as any suspension bridge across an Alpine ravine. This gigantic viaduct, about 500 Martial years old, is still the most magnificent achievement of engineering in this department. The main roads, connecting important cities or forming the principal routes of commerce in the absence of convenient river or sea carriage, are carried over gulfs, streams, ravines, and valleys, and through hills, as Terrestrial engineers have recently promised to carry railways over the minor inequalities of ground. That which we were following is an especially magnificent road, and signalised by several grand exhibitions of engineering daring and genius. It runs from Amacasfe for a thousand miles in one straight line direct as that of a Roman road, and with but half-a-dozen changes of level in the whole distance. It crossed in the space of a few miles a valley, or rather dell, 200 feet in depth, and with semi-perpendicular sides, and a stream wider than the Mississippi above the junction of the Ohio. Next it traversed the precipitous side of a hill for a distance of three or four miles, where Nature had not afforded foothold for a rabbit or a squirrel. The stupendous bridges and the magnificent open road cut in the side of the rock, its roof supported on the inside by the hill itself, on the outside by pillars left at regular intervals when the stone was cut, formed from one point

a single splendid view. Pointing it out to Enva, I was a little surprised to find her capable, under the guidance of a few remarks from myself, of appreciating and taking pride in the marvellous work of her race. In another place, a tunnel pierced directly an intervening range of hills for about eight miles, interrupted only in two points by short deep open cuttings. This passage, unlike those on the river previously mentioned, was constantly and brilliantly lighted. The whole road indeed was lit up from the fall of the evening to the dispersion of the morning mist with a brilliancy nearly equal to that of daylight. As I dared not travel at a greater rate than twenty-five miles per hour—my experience, though it enabled me to manage the carriage with sufficient skill, not giving me confidence to push it to its greatest speed—the journey must occupy several days. We had, therefore, to rest at the stations provided by public authority for travellers undertaking such long land journeys. These are built like ordinary Martial houses, save that in lieu of peristyle or interior garden is an open square planted with shrubs and merely large enough to afford light to the inner rooms. The chambers also are very much smaller than those of good private houses. As these stations are nearly always placed in towns or villages, or in well-peopled country neighbourhoods, food is supplied by the nearest confectioner to each traveller individually, and a single person, assisted by the ambau, is able to manage the largest of them.

The last two or three days of our journey were bitterly cold, and not a little trying. My own undergarment of thick soft leather kept me warmer than the

warmest greatcoat or cloak could have done, though I wore a large cloak of the kargynda's fur in addition—the prize of the hunt that had so nearly cost me dear, a personal and very gracious present from the Camptâ. My companion, who had not the former advantage, though wrapped in as many outer garments and quilts as I had thought necessary, felt the cold severely, and felt still more the dense chill mist which both by night and day covered the greater part of the country. This was not infrequently so thick as to render travelling almost perilous; and but that an electric light, required by law, was placed at each end of the carriage, collisions would have been inevitable. These hardships afforded another illustration of the subjection of the sex resulting from the rule of theoretical equality. More than a year's experience of natural kindness and consideration had not given Enva courage to make a single complaint; and at first she did her best to conceal the weeping which was the only, but almost continuous, expression of her suffering. She was almost as much surprised as gratified by my expressions of sympathy, and the trouble I took to obtain, at the first considerable town we reached, an apparatus by which the heat generated by motion itself was made to supply a certain warmth through the tubular open-work of the carriage to the persons of its occupants. The cold was as severe as that of a Swedish winter, though we never approached within seventeen degrees of the Arctic circle, a distance from the Pole equivalent to that of Northern France. The Martial thermometer, in form more like a watch-barometer, which I carried in my belt, marked a cold equivalent to 12° below zero C. in the middle of the

day; and when left in the carriage for the night it had registered no less than 22° below zero.

One of the Professors of the University received us as his guests, assigning to us, as is usual when a lady is of the party, rooms looking on the peristyle, but whose windows remained closed. Enva, of course, spent her time chiefly with the ladies of the family. When alone with me she talked freely, though needing some encouragement to express her own ideas, or report what she had heard; but she had no intention of concealment, perhaps no notion that I was interested in her accounts of the prevalent feeling respecting the heretics of whom she heard much, except of course that Eveena's father was among them. Through her I learned that much pains had been taken to intensify and excite into active hostility the dislike and distrust with which they had always been regarded by the public at large, and especially by the scientific guilds, whose members control all educational establishments. That some attempt against them was meditated appeared to be generally reported. Its nature and the movers in the matter were not known, so far as I could gather, even to men so influential as the chief Professors of the University. It was not merely that the women had heard nothing on this point, but that their lords had dropped expressions of surprise at the strictness with which the secret was kept.

As their parents pay, when first the children are admitted to the public Nurseries, the price of an average education, this special instruction is given in the first instance at the cost of the State to those who, on account of their taste and talent, are selected by the

teachers of the Colleges. But before they leave the University a bond is taken for the amount of this outlay, which has to be repaid within three years. It is fair to say that the tax is trivial in comparison with the ordinary gains of their professions; the more so that no such preference as, in our world, is almost universally given to a reputation which can only be acquired by age, excludes the youth of Mars from full and profitable employment.

The youths were delighted to receive a lecture on the forms of Terrestrial government, and the outlines of their history; a topic I selected because they were already acquainted with the substance of the addresses elsewhere delivered. This afforded me an opportunity of making the personal acquaintance of some of the more distinguished pupils. The clearness of their intellect, the thoroughness of their knowledge in their several studies, and the distinctness of their acquaintance with the outlines and principles of Martial learning generally,—an acquaintance as free from smattering and superficiality as necessarily unembarrassed by detail,—testified emphatically to the excellence of the training they had received, as well as to the hereditary development of their brains. What was, however, not less striking was the utter absence at once of what I was accustomed to regard as moral principle, and of the generous impulses which in youth sometimes supply the place of principle. They avowed the most absolute selfishness, the most abject fear of death and pain, with a frankness that would have amazed the Cynics and disgusted the felons of almost any Earthly nation. There were partial exceptions, but these were to be

found exclusively among those in training for what we should call public life, for administrative or judicial duties. These, though professing no devotion to the interest of others, and little that could be called public spirit, did nevertheless understand that in return for the high rank, the great power, and the liberal remuneration they would enjoy, they were bound to consider primarily the public interest in the performance of their functions—the right of society to just or at least to carefully legal judgment, and diligent efficient administration. Their feeling, however, was rather professional than personal, the pride of students in the perfection of their art rather than the earnestness of men conscious of grave human responsibilities.

In conversing with the chief of this Faculty, I learned some peculiarities of the system of government with which I was not yet acquainted. Promotion never depends on those with whom a public servant comes into personal contact, but on those one or two steps above the latter. The judges, for instance, of the lower rank are selected by the principal judge of each dominion; these and their immediate assistants, by the Chief of the highest Court. The officers around and under the Governor of a province are named by the Regent of the dominion; those surrounding the Regent, as the Regent himself, by the Sovereign. Every officer, however, can be removed by his immediate superior; but it depends on the chief with whom his appointment rests, whether he shall be transferred to a similar post elsewhere or simply dismissed. Thus, while no man can be compelled to work with instruments he dislikes, no subordinate is at the mercy of personal caprice or anti-

pathy. Promotion, judicial and administrative, ends below the highest point. The judges of the Supreme Court are named by the Sovereign—with the advice of a Council, including the Regents, the judges of that Court, and the heads of the Philosophic and Educational Institutes—from among the advocates and students of law, or from among the ablest administrators who seem to possess judicial faculties. The code is written and simple. Every dubious point that arises in the course of litigation is referred, by appeal or directly by the judge who decides it, to the Chief Court, and all points of interpretation thus referred, are finally settled by an addition to the code at its periodical revision. The Sovereign can erase or add at pleasure to this code. But he can do so only in full Council, and must hear, though he need not regard, the opinions of his advisers. He can, however, suspend immediately till the next meeting of the Council the enforcement of any article.

The Regents are never named from among subordinate officials, nor is a Regent ever promoted to the throne. It is held that the qualities required in an absolute Sovereign are not such as are demanded from or likely to be developed in the subordinate ruler of a dominion however important, and that functions like those of a Regent, at least as important as those of the Viceroy of India, ought not to be entrusted to men trained in subaltern administrative duties. Among the youths of greatest promise, in their eighth year, a certain small number are selected by the chiefs of the University, who visit for this purpose all the Nurseries of the kingdom. With what purpose these youths are separated from their fellows is not explained to

them. They are carefully educated for the highest public duties. Year by year those deemed fitter for less important offices are drafted off. There remain at last the very few who are thought competent to the functions of Regent or Camptâ, and from among these the Sovereign himself selects at pleasure his own successor and the occupant of any vacant Regency. The latter, however, holds his post at first on probation, and can, of course, be removed at any time by the Sovereign. If the latter should not before his death have named his own successor, the Council by a process of elimination is reduced to three, and these cast lots which shall name the new Autocrat from among the youths deemed worthy of the throne, of whom six are seldom living at the same time. No Prince is ever appointed under the age of fourteen (twenty-seven) or over that of sixteen (thirty). No Camptâ has ever abdicated; but they seldom live to fall into that sort of inert indolence which may be called the dotage of their race. The nature of their functions seems to preserve their mental activity longer than that of others; and probably they are not permitted to live when they have become manifestly unfit or incapable to reign.

When first invited to visit the University, I had hoped to make it only a stage and stepping-stone to something yet more interesting—to visit the Arctic hunters once more, and join them in the most exciting of their pursuits; a chase by the electric light of the great Amphibia of the frozen sea-belt immediately surrounding the permanent ice-cap of the Northern Pole. For this, however, the royal licence was required;

and, as when I made a similar request during the fur-chase of the Southern season, I met with a peremptory refusal. "There are two men in this world," said the Prince, "who would entertain such a wish. I dare not avow it; and if there were a third, he would assuredly be convicted of incurable lunacy, though on all other points he were as cold-blooded as the President of the Academy or the Vivisector-General." I did not tell Eveena of my request till it had been refused; and if anything could have lessened my vexation at the loss of this third opportunity, it would have been the expression of her countenance at that moment. Indeed, I was then satisfied that I could not have left her in the fever of alarm and anxiety that any suspicion of my purpose would have caused.

I seized, however, the opportunity of a winter voyage in a small vessel, manned by four or five ocean-hunters, less timid and susceptible to surface disturbances than ordinary seamen. On such an excursion, Enva, though a far less pleasant companion, was a less anxious charge than Eveena. We made for the Northern coast, and ran for some hundred miles, along a sea-board not unlike that of Norway, but on a miniature scale. Though in some former age this hemisphere, like Europe, has been subject to glacial action much more general and intense than at present, its ice-seas and ice-rivers must always have been comparatively shallow and feeble. Reaching at last a break in the long line of cliff-guarded capes and fiords, where the sea, half covered with low islands, eats a broad and deep ingress into the land-belt, I disembarked, and made a day's land journey to the north-

ward. The ground was covered with a sheet of hard-frozen snow about eighteen inches deep, with an upper surface of pure ice. For the ordinary carriage, here useless, was substituted a sledge, driven from behind by an instrument something between a paddle-wheel and a screw, worked, of course, by the usual electric machinery. The cold was far more intense than I had ever before known it; and the mist that fell at the close of the very short zyda of daylight rendered it all but intolerable. The Arctic circular thermometer fell to within a few points from its minimum of -50° Centigrade [?]. No flesh could endure exposure to such an atmosphere; and were not the inner mask and clothing of soft leather pervaded by a constant feeble current of electricity . . .

As we made our way back to the open sea, the temptation to disobey the royal order was all but irresistible. No fewer than three kargyndau were within shot at one and the same time; plunging from the shore of an icy island to emerge with their prey—a fish somewhat resembling the salmon in form and flavour. My companions, however, were terrified at the thought of disobedience to the law; and as we had but one mordyta (lightning-gun) among the party, and the uncertainty of the air-gun had been before proven to my cost, there was some force in their supplementary argument that, if I did not kill the kargynda, it was probable that the kargynda might board us; in which event our case would be summarily disposed of, without troubling the Courts or allowing time to apply, even by telegraph, for the royal pardon. I was suggesting, more to the alarm than amusement of the crew,

that we might close the hatches, and either carry the regal beast away captive, or, at worst, dive and drown him—for he cannot swim very far—when their objections were enforced in an unexpected manner. We were drifting beyond shot of the nearest brute, when the three suddenly plunged at once, and as if by concert, and when they rose, were all evidently making for the vessel, and within some eighty yards. I then learnt a new advantage of the electric machinery, as compared with the most powerful steam-engine. A pressure upon a button, and a few seconds sufficed to exchange a speed of four for one of twenty miles an hour; while, instead of sinking the vessel below the surface, the master directed the engine to pump out all the liquid ballast she contained. The waterspout thus sent forth half-drowned the enemy which had already come within a few yards of our starboard quarter, and effectually scared the others. It was just as well that Enva, who heartily hated the bitter cold, was snugly ensconced in the warm cushions of the cabin, and had not, therefore, the opportunity of giving to Eveena, on our return, her version of an adventure whose alarming aspect would have impressed them both more than its ludicrous side. For half a minute I thought that I had, in sheer folly, exposed half a dozen lives to a peril none the less real and none the more satisfactory that, if five had been killed, the survivor could not have so told the story as to avoid laughing—or being laughed at.

Sweet and serene as was Eveena's smile of welcome, it could not conceal the traces of more than mere depression on her countenance. Heartily willing to administer an effective lesson to her tormentors, I seized

the occasion of the sunset meal to notice the weary and harassed look she had failed wholly to banish.

"You look worse each time I return, Madonna. This time it is not merely my absence, if it ever were so. I *will* know who or what has driven and hunted you so."

Taken thus by surprise, every face but one bore witness to the truth: Eveena's distress, Eunane's mixed relief and dismay, shared in yet greater degree by Velna, who knew less of me, the sheer terror and confusion of the rest, were equally significant. The Martial judge who said that "the best evidence was lost because colour could not be tested or blushes analysed," would have passed sentence at once. But if Eive's air of innocent unconsciousness and childish indifference were not sincere, it merited the proverbial praise of consummate affectation, "more golden than the sun and whiter than snow." Eveena's momentary glance at once drew mine upon this "pet child," but neither disturbed her. Nor did she overact her part. "Eivé," said Enva one day, "never salts her tears or paints her blushes." As soon as she caught my look of doubt—

"Have I done wrong?" she said, in a tone half of confidence, half of reproach. "Punish me, then, Clas-fempta, as you please—with Eveena's sandal."

The repartee delighted those who had reason to desire any diversion. The appeal to Eveena disarmed my unwilling and momentary distrust. Eveena, however, answered by neither word nor look, and the party presently broke up. Eivé crept close to claim some silent atonement for unspoken suspicion, and a few minutes had elapsed before, to the evident alarm of several conscious culprits, I sought Eveena in her own chamber.

In spite of all deprecation, I insisted on the explanation she had evaded in public.

"I guess," I said, "as much as you can tell me about 'the four.' I have borne too long with those who have made your life that of a hunted therne, and rendered myself anxious and restless every day and hour that I have left you alone. Unless you will deny that they have done so—— Well, then, I *will* have peace for you and for myself. I cannot leave you to their mercy, nor can I remain at home for the next twelve dozen days, like a chained watch-dragon. Pass them over!" (as she strove to remonstrate); "there is something new this time. You have been harassed and frightened as well as unhappy."

"Yes," she admitted, "but I can give nothing like a reason. I dare not entreat you not to ask, and yet I am only like a child, that wakes screaming by night, and cannot say of what she is afraid. Ought she not to be whipped?"

"I can't say, *bambina*; but I should not advise Eivé to startle *you* in that way! But, seriously, I suppose fear is most painful when it has no cause that can be removed. I have seen brave soldiers panic-stricken in the dark, without well knowing why."

I watched her face as I spoke, and noted that while the pet name I had used in the first days of our marriage, now recalled by her image, elicited a faint smile, the mention of Eivé clouded it again. She was so unwilling to speak, that I caught at the clue afforded by her silence.

"It *is* Eivé, then? The little hypocrite! She shall find your sandal heavier than mine."

"No, no!" she pleaded eagerly. "You have seen what Eivé is in your presence; and to me she is always the same. If she were not, could I complain of her?"

"And why not, Eveena? Do you think I should hesitate between you?"

"No!" she answered, with unusual decision of tone. "I will tell you exactly what you would do. You would take my word implicitly; you would have made up your mind before you heard her; you would deal harder measure to Eivé than to any one, *because* she is your pet; you would think for once not of sparing the culprit, but of satisfying me; and afterwards"——

She paused, and I saw that she would not conclude in words a sentence I could perhaps have finished for myself.

"I see," I replied, "that Eivé is the source of your trouble, but not what the trouble is. For her sake, do not force me to extort the truth from her."

"I doubt whether she has guessed my misgiving," Eveena answered. "It may be that you are right—that it is because she was so long the only one you were fond of, that I cannot like and trust her as you do. But . . . you leave the telegraph in my charge, understanding, of course, that it will be used as when you are at home. So, after Davilo's warning, I have written their messages for Eunane and the others, but I could not refuse Eivé's request to write her own, and, like you, I have never read them."

"Why?" I asked. "Surely it is strange to give her, of all, a special privilege and confidence?"

Eveena was silent. She could in no case have reproached me in words, and even the reproach of silence

was so unusual that I could not but feel it keenly. I saw at that moment that for whatever had happened or might happen I might thank myself; might thank the doubt I would not avow to my own mind, but could not conceal from her, that Eveena had condescended to something like jealousy of one whose childish simplicity, real or affected, had strangely won my heart, as children do win hearts hardened by experience of life's roughness and evil.

"I know nothing," Eveena said at last: "yet somehow, and wholly without any reason I can explain, I fear. Eivé, you may remember, has, as your companion, made acquaintance with many households whose heads you do not believe friends to you or the Zinta. She is a diligent correspondent. She never affects to conceal anything, and yet no one of us has lately seen the contents of a note sent or received by her."

There was nothing tangible in Eveena's suspicion. It was most repugnant to my own feelings, and yet it implanted, whether by force of sympathy or of instinct, a misgiving that never left me again.

"My own," I answered, "I would trust your judgment, your observation or feminine instinct and insight into character, far sooner than my own conclusions upon solid facts. But instincts and presentiments, though *we* are not scientifically ignorant enough to disregard them, are not evidence on which we can act or even inquire."

"No," she said. "And yet it is hard to feel, as I cannot help feeling, that the thunder-cloud is forming, that the bolt is almost ready to strike, and that you are

risking life, and perhaps more than life, out of a delicacy no other man would show towards a child—since child you will have her—who, I feel sure, deserves all she might receive from the hands of one who would have the truth at any cost.”

“You feel,” I answered, “for me as I should feel for you. But is death so terrible to *us*? It means leaving you—I wish we knew that it does not mean losing for ever, after so brief an enjoyment, all that is perishable in love like ours—or it would not be worth fearing. I don’t think I ever did fear it till you made my life so sweet. But life is not worth an unkindness or injustice. Better die trusting to the last than live in the misery and shame of suspecting one I love, or dreading treacherous malice from any hand under my own roof.”

When I met Davilo the next morning, the grave and anxious expression of his face—usually calm and serene even in deepest thought, as are those of the experienced members of an Order confident in the consciousness of irresistible secret power—not a little disturbed me. As Eveena had said, the thunder-cloud was forming; and a chill went to my heart which in facing measurable and open peril it had never felt.

“I bring you,” he said, “a message that will not, I am afraid, be welcome. He whose guest you were at Serocasfe invites you to pay him an immediate visit; and the invitation must be accepted at once.”

I drew myself up with no little indignation at the imperative tone, but feeling at least equal awe at the stern calmness with which the mandate was spoken.

“And what compels me to such haste, or to compliance without consideration?”

"That power," he returned, "which none can resist, and to which you may not demur."

Seeing that I still hesitated—in truth, the summons had turned my vague misgiving into intense though equally vague alarm and even terror, which as unmanly and unworthy I strove to repress, but which asserted its domination in a manner as unwonted as unwelcome—he drew aside a fold of his robe, and showed within the silver Star of the Order, supported by the golden sash, that marked a rank second only to that of the wearer of the Signet itself. I understood too well by this time, through conversations with him and other communications of which it has been needless to speak, the significance of this revelation. I knew the impossibility of questioning the authority to which I had pledged obedience. I realised with great amazement the fact that a secondary position on my own estate, and a personal charge of my own safety, had been accepted by a Chief of the Zinta.

"There is, of course," I replied at last, "no answer to a mandate so enforced. But, Chief, reluctant as I am to say it, I fear—fear as I have never done before; and yet fear I cannot say, I cannot guess what."

"There is no cause for alarm," he said somewhat contemptuously. "In this journey, sudden, speedy, and made under our guard as on our summons, there is little or none of that peril which has beset you so long."

"You forget, Chief," I rejoined, "that you speak to a soldier, whose chosen trade was to risk life at the word of a superior; to one whose youth thought no smile so bright as that of naked steel, and had often 'kissed the lips of the lightning' ere the down darkened his own.

At any rate, you have told me daily for more than a year that I am living under constant peril of assassination; have I seemed to quail thereat? If, then, I am now terrified for the first time, that which I dread, without knowing or dreaming what it is, is assuredly a peril worse than any I have known, the shadow of a calamity against which I have neither weapon nor courage. It cannot be for myself that I am thus appalled," I continued, the thought flashing into my mind as I spoke it, "and there is but one whose life is so closely bound with mine that danger to her should bring such terror as this. I go at your bidding, but I will not go alone."

He paused for some time, apparently in perplexity, certainly in deep thought, before he replied.

"As you will. One thing more. The slips of tafroo with which you furnished me have been under the eyes of which you have heard. This" (handing me the one that bore no mark) "has passed, so far as the highest powers of the sense that is not of the body can perceive, through none but innocent hands. The hand from which you received this" (the marked slip) "is spotted with treason, and may to-morrow be red."

I was less impressed by this declaration than probably would have been any other member of the Order. I had seen on Earth the most marvellous perceptions of a perfectly lucid vision succeeded, sometimes within the space of the same day, by dreams or hallucinations the most absolutely deceptive. I felt, therefore, more satisfaction in the acquittal of Eunane, whom I had never doubted, than trouble at the grave suspicion suggested against Eivé—a suspicion I still refused to entertain.

"You should enter your balloon as soon as the sunset mist will conceal it," said Davilo. "By mid-day you may reach the deep bay on the mid sea-belt of the North, where a swift vessel will meet you and convey you in two or three days by a direct course through the canal and gulf you have traversed already, to the port from which you commenced your first submarine voyage."

"You had better," I said, "make your instruction a little more particular, or I shall hardly know how to direct my course."

"Do not dream," he answered, "that you will be permitted to undertake such a journey but under the safest guidance. At the time I have named all will be ready for your departure, and you have simply to sleep or read or meditate as you will, till you reach your destination."

Eveena was not a little startled when I informed her of the sudden journey before me, and my determination that she should be my companion. It was unquestionably a trying effort for her, especially the balloon voyage, which would expose her to the cold of the mists and of the night, and I feared to the intenser cold of the upper air. But I dared not leave her, and she was pleased by a peremptory decision which made her the companion of my absence, without leaving room for discussion or question. The time for our departure was drawing near when, followed by Eunane, she came into my chamber.

"If we are to be long away," she said, "you must say on whom my charges are to devolve."

"As you please," I answered, sure of her choice, and well content to see her hand over her cares to Eunane,

who, if she lacked the wisdom and forbearance of Eveena, could certainly hold the reins with a stronger hand.

"Eivé," she said, "has asked the charge of my flower-bed; but I had promised it, and"——

"And you would rather give it," I answered, "to Eunane? Naturally; and I should not care to allow Eivé the chance of spoiling your work. I think we may now trust whatever is yours in those once troublesome hands," looking at Eunane, "with perfect assurance that they will do their best."

I had never before parted even from Eunane with any feeling of regret; but on this occasion an impulse I could not account for, but have ever since been glad to remember, made me turn at the last moment and add to Eveena's earnest embrace a few words of affection and confidence, which evidently cheered and encouraged her deputy. The car that awaited us was of the light tubular construction common here, formed of the silvery metal *zorinta*. About eighteen feet in length and half that breadth, it was divided into two compartments; each, with the aid of canopy and curtains, forming at will a closed tent, and securing almost as much privacy as an Arab family enjoys, or opening to the sky. In that with which the sails and machinery were connected were Davilo and two of his attendants. The other had been carefully lined and covered with furs and wrappings, indicating an attention to my companion which indeed is rarely shown to women by their own lords, and which none but the daughter of Esmo would have received even among the brethren of the Order. Ere we departed I had arranged

her cushions and wrapped her closely in the warmest coverings; and flinging over her at last the kargynda skin received from the Camptâ, I bade her sleep if possible during our aerial voyage. There was need to provide as carefully as possible for her comfort. The balloon shot up at once above the evening mists to a height at which the cold was intense, but at which our voyage could be guided by the stars, invisible from below, and at which we escaped the more dangerously chilling damp. The wind that blew right in our teeth, caused by no atmospheric current but by our own rapid passage, would in a few moments have frozen my face, perhaps fatally, had not thick skins been arranged to screen us. Even through these it blew with intense severity, and I was glad indeed to cover myself from head to foot and lie down beside Eveena. Her hand as she laid it on mine was painfully cold; but the shivering I could hardly suppress made her anxious to part in my favour with some at least of the many coverings that could hardly screen herself from the searching blast. Not at the greatest height I reached among the Himalayas, nor on the Steppes of Tartary, had I experienced a cold severer than this. The Sun had just turned westward when we reached the port at which we were to embark. Despite the cold, Eveena had slept during the latter part of our voyage, and was still sleeping when I placed her on the cushions in our cabin. The sudden and most welcome change from bitter cold to comfortable warmth awakened her, as it at last allowed me to sleep. Our journey was continued below the surface at a rate of more than twelve hundred miles in the day, a speed which made observation through the thick but perfectly

transparent side windows of our cabin impossible. I was indisposed for meditation, which could have been directed to no other subject than the mysterious purpose of our journey, and had not provided myself with books. But in Eveena's company it was impossible that the time should pass slowly or wearily.

In this balloon journey I had a specially advantageous opportunity of observing the two moons—velnaa, as they are called. *Cavelna*, or Caulna, the nearer, in diameter about 8' or a little more than one-fourth that of our Moon, is a tolerably brilliant object, about 5000 miles from the surface. Moving, like all planets and satellites, from west to east, it completes its stellar revolution and its phases in less than seven and a half hours; the contrary revolution of the skies prolongs its circuit around the planet to a period of ten hours. Zeelna (*Zevelna*) returns to the same celestial meridian in thirty hours; but as in this time the starry vault has completed about a rotation and a quarter in the opposite direction, it takes nearly five days to reappear on the same horizon. It is about 3' in diameter, and about 12,000 miles from the surface. The result of the combined motions is that the two moons, to the eye, seem to move in opposite directions. When we rose above the mists, Caulna was visible as a very fine crescent in the west; Zeelna was rising in the east, and almost full; but hardly a more brilliant object than Venus when seen to most advantage from Earth. Both moved so rapidly among the stars that their celestial change of place was apparent from minute to minute. But, as regarded our own position, the appearance was as opposite as their direction. Zeelna, travers-

ing in twelve hours only one-fifth of the visible hemisphere, while crossing in the same time 144° on the zodiac—twelve degrees per hour, or our Moon's diameter in two minutes and a half—was left behind by the stars; and fixing what I may call the ocular attention on her, she seemed to stand still while they slowly passed her; thus making their revolution perceptible to sense as it never is on Earth, for lack of a similar standard. Caulna, rising in the west and moving eastwards, crossed the visible sky in five hours, and passed through the stars at the rate of 48° per hour, so that she seemed to sail past them like a golden cloudlet or celestial vessel driven by a slow wind. It happened this night that she passed over the star Fomalhaut—an occultation which I watched with great interest through an excellent field-glass, but which lasted only for about half a minute. About an hour before midnight the two moons passed each other in the Eastern sky; both gibbous at the moment, like our Moon in her last quarter. The difference in size and motion was then most striking; Caulna seeming to rush past her companion, and the latter looking like a stationary star in the slowly moving sky.

CHAPTER XXV.

APOSTACY.

WE were received on landing by our former host and conducted to his house. On this occasion, however, I was not detained in the hall, but permitted at once to enter the chamber allotted to us. Eveena, who had exacted from me all that I knew, and much that I meant to conceal, respecting the occasion of our journey, was much agitated and not a little alarmed. My own humble rank in the Zinta rendered so sudden and imperative a summons the more difficult to understand, and though by this time well versed in the learning, neither of us was familiar with the administration of the Brotherhood. I was glad therefore on her account, even more than on my own, when, a scratch at the door having obtained admission for an amba, it placed before me a message from Esmo requesting a private conference. Her father's presence set Eveena's mind at rest; since she had learned, strangely enough from myself, what she had never known before, the rank he held among the brethren.

"I have summoned you," he said as soon as I joined him, "for more than one reason. There is but one, however, that I need now explain. Important ques-

tions are as a rule either settled by the Chiefs alone in Council, or submitted to a general meeting of the Order. In this case neither course can be adopted. It would not have occurred to myself that, under present circumstances, you could render material service in either of the two directions in which it may be required. But those by whom the cause has been prepared have asked that you should be one of the Convent, and such a request is never refused. Indeed, its refusal would imply either such injustice as would render the whole proceeding utterly incompatible with the first principles of our cohesion, or such distrust of the person summoned as is never felt for a member of the Brotherhood. I would rather say no more on the subject now. Your nerve and judgment will be sufficiently tried to-night; and it is a valuable maxim of our science that, in the hours immediately preceding either an important decision or a severe trial, the spirit should be left as far as possible calm and unvexed by vague shadows of that which is to come."

The maxim thus expressed, if rendered into the language of material medicine, is among those which every man of experience holds and practically acts upon. I turned the conversation, then, by inviting Esmo into my own apartment; and I was touched indeed by the eager delight, even stronger than I had expected, with which Eveena welcomed her father, and inquired into the minutest details of the home life from which she had been, as it seemed to her, so long separated. What was, however, specially characteristic was the delicate care with which, even in this first meeting with one of

her own family, she contrived still to give the paramount place in her attention to her husband, and never for a moment to let him feel excluded from a conversation with whose topics he was imperfectly acquainted, and in which he might have been supposed uninterested. The hours thus passed pleasantly away; and, except when Kevimâ joined us at the evening meal, adding a new and unexpected pleasure to Eveena's natural delight in this sudden reunion, we remained undisturbed until a very low electric signal, sounding apparently through several chambers at once, recalled Esmo's mind to the duties before him.

"You will not," he said, "return till late, and I wish you would induce Eveena to ensure, by composing herself to sleep before your return, that you shall not be asked to converse until the morning."

He withdrew with Kevimâ, and, as instructed, I proceeded to change my dress for one of pure white adapted to the occasion, with only a band of crimson around the waist and throat, and to invest myself in the badge of the Order. The turban which I wore, without attracting attention, in the Asiatic rather than in the Martial form, was of white mingled with red; a novelty which seemed to Eveena's eyes painfully ominous. In Martial language, as in Zveltic symbolism, crimson generally takes the place of black as the emblem of guilt and peril. When Esmo re-entered our chamber for a moment to summon me, he was invested, as in the Shrine itself, in the full attire of his office, and I was recalled to a recollection of the reverence due to the head of the Brotherhood by the sudden change in Eveena's manner. To her father, though a most re-

spectful, she was a fearlessly affectionate child. For Clavelta she had only the reverence, deeply intermingled with awe, with which a devout Catholic convert from the East may approach for the first time some more than usually imposing occupant of the Chair of St. Peter. Before the arm that bore the Signet, and the sash of gold, we bent knee and head in the deference prescribed by our rules—a homage which the youngest child in the public Nurseries would not dream of offering to the Camptâ himself. At a sign from his hand I followed Esmo, hoping rather than expecting that Eveena would obey the counsel indirectly addressed to her. Traversing the same passages as before, save that a slight turn avoided the symbolic bridge, and formally challenged at each point as usual by the sentries, who saluted with profoundest reverence the Signet of the Order, we passed at last into the Hall of Initiation.

But on this occasion its aspect was completely changed. A space immediately in front of what I may call the veil of the Shrine was closed in by drapery of white bordered with crimson. The Chiefs occupied, as before, their seats on the platform. Some fifty members of the Order sat to right and left immediately below; but Esmo, on this occasion, seated himself on the second leftward step of the Throne, which, with the silver light and the other mystic emblems, was unveiled in the same strange manner as before at his approach. Near the lower end of the small chamber thus formed, crossing the passage between the seats on either hand, was a barrier of the bright red metal I have more than once mentioned, and behind it a seat of some sable material. Behind this, to right and left, stood silent and

erect two sentries robed in green, and armed with the usual spear. A deep intense absolute silence prevailed, from the moment when the last of the party had taken his place, for the space of some ten minutes. In the faces of the Chiefs and of some of the elder Initiates, who were probably aware of the nature of the scene to follow, was an expression of calm but deep pain and regret; crossed now and then by a shade of anxiety, such as rarely appeared in that abode of assured peace and profound security. On no countenance was visible the slightest shadow of restlessness or curiosity. In the changed aspect of the place, the changed tone of its associations and of the feelings habitual to its frequenters, there was something which impressed and overawed the petulance of youth, and even the indifference of an experience like my own. At last, stretching forth the ivory-like staff of mingled white and red, which on this occasion each of the Chiefs had substituted for their usual crystal wand, Esmo spoke, not raising his voice a single semitone above its usual pitch, but with even unwonted gravity—

“Come forward, Asco Zvelta!” he said.

The sight I now witnessed, no description could represent to one who had not seen the same. Parting the drapery at the lower end, there came forward a figure in which the most absolutely inexperienced eye could not fail to recognise a culprit called to trial. “Came forward,” I have said, because I can use no other words. But such was not the term which would have occurred to any one who witnessed the movement. “Was dragged forward,” I should say, did I attempt to convey the impression produced;—save that no compulsion, no physical

force was used, nor were there any to use it. And yet the miserable man approached slowly, reluctantly, shrinking back as one who strives with superior corporeal power exerted to force him onward, as if physically dragged on step by step by invisible bonds held by hands unseen. So with white face and shaking form he reached the barrier, and knelt as Esmo rose from his place, honouring instinctively, though his eyes seemed incapable of discerning them, the symbols of supreme authority. Then, at a silent gesture, he rose and fell back into the chair placed for him, apparently unable to stand and scarcely able to sustain himself on his seat.

"Brother," said the junior of the Chiefs, or he who occupied the place farthest to the right;—and now I noticed that eleven were present, the last seat on the right of him who spoke being vacant—"you have unveiled to strangers the secrets of the Shrine."

He paused for an answer; and, in a tone strangely unnatural and expressionless, came from the scarcely parted lips of the culprit the reply—

"It is true."

"You have," said the next of the Chiefs, "accepted reward to place the lives of your brethren at the mercy of their enemies."

"It is true."

"You have," said he who occupied the lowest seat upon the left, "forsworn in heart and deed, if not in word, the vows by which you willingly bound yourself, and the law whose boons you had accepted."

Again the same confession, forced evidently by some overwhelming power from one who would, if he could, have denied or remained silent.

"And to whom," said Esmo, interposing for the first time, "have you thus betrayed us?"

"I know not," was the reply.

"Explain," said the Chief immediately to the left of the Throne, who, if there were a difference in the expression of the calm sad faces, seemed to entertain more of compassion and less of disgust and repulsion towards the offender than any other.

"Those with whom I spoke," replied the culprit, in the same strange tone, "were not known to me, but gave token of authority next to that of the Campâ. They told me that the existence of the Order had long been known, that many of its members were clearly indicated by their household practices, that their destruction was determined; that I was known as a member of the Order, and might choose between perishing first of their victims and receiving reward such as I should name myself for the information I could give."

"What have you told?" asked another of the Chiefs.

"I have not named one of the symbols. I have not betrayed the Shrine or the passwords. I have told that the Zinta *is*. I have told the meaning of the Serpent, the Circle, and the Star, though I have not named them."

"And," said he on the left of the Throne, "naming the hope that is more than all hope, recalling the power that is above all power, could you dare to renounce the one and draw on your own head the justice of the other? What reward could induce a child of the Light to turn back into darkness? What authority could protect the traitor from the fate he imprecated and accepted when he first knelt before the Throne?"

"The hope was distant and the light was dim," the offender answered. "I was threatened and I was tempted. I knew that death, speedy and painless, was the penalty of treason to the Order, that a death of prolonged torture might be the vengeance of the power that menaced me. I hoped little in the far and dim future of the Serpent's promise, and I hoped and feared much in the life on this side of death."

"Do you know," asked the last inquirer again, "no name, and nothing that can enable us to trace those with whom you spoke or those who employed them?"

"Only this," was the answer, "that one of them has an especial hatred to one Initiate present," pointing to myself; "and seeks his life, not only as a child of the Star, not only as husband of the daughter of Clavelta, but for a reason that is not known to me."

"And," asked another Chief, "do you know what instrument that enemy seeks to use?"

"One who has over her intended victim such influence as few of her sex ever have over their lords; one of whom his love will learn no distrust, against whom his heart has no guard and his manhood no wisdom."

A shiver of horror passed over the forms of the Chiefs and of many who sat near them, incomprehensible to me till a sudden light was afforded by the indignant interruption of Kevimâ, who sat not far from myself.

"It cannot be," he cried, "or you can name her whom you accuse."

"Be silent!" Esmo said, in the cold, grave tone of a president rebuking disorder, mingled with the deeper displeasure of a priest repressing irreverence in the

midst of the most solemn religious rite. "None may speak here till the Chiefs have ceased to speak."

None of the latter, however, seemed disposed to ask another question. The guilt of the accused was confessed. All that he could tell to guide their further inquiries had been told. To doubt that what was forced from him was to the best of his knowledge true, was to them, who understood the mysterious power that had compelled the spirit and the lips to an unwilling confession, impossible. And if it had seemed that further information might have been extracted relative to my own personal danger, a stronger tie, a deeper obligation, bound them to the supposed object of the last obscure imputation, and none was willing to elicit further charges or clearer evidence. Probably also they anticipated that, when the word was extended to the Initiates, I should take up my own cause.

"Would any brother speak?" asked Esmo, when the silence of the Chiefs had lasted for a few moments.

But his rebuke had silenced Kevimâ, and no one else cared to interpose. The eyes of the assembly turned upon me so generally and so pointedly, that at last I felt myself forced, though against my own judgment, to rise.

"I have no question to ask the accused," I said.

"Then," replied Esmo calmly, "you have nothing now to say. Give to the brother accused before us the cup of rest."

A small goblet was handed by one of the sentries to the miserable creature, now half-insensible, who awaited our judgment. In a very few moments he had sunk into a slumber in which his face was comparatively

calm, and his limbs had ceased to tremble. His fate was to be debated in the presence indeed of his body, but in the absence of consciousness and knowledge.

"Has any elder brother," inquired Esmo, "counsel to afford?"

No word was spoken.

"Has any brother counsel to afford?"

Again all were silent, till the glance which the Chief cast in order along the ranks of the assembly fell upon myself.

"One word," I said. "I claim permission to speak, because the matter touches closely and cruelly my own honour."

There was that inaudible, invisible, motionless "movement," as some French reporters call it, of surprise throughout the assembly which communicates itself instinctively to a speaker.

"My own honour," I continued, "in the honour dearer and nearer to me even than my own. What the accused has spoken may or may not be true."

"It is true," interposed a Chief, probably pitying my ignorance.

"May be true," I continued, "though I will not believe it, to whomsoever his words may apply. That no such treason as they have suggested ever for one moment entered, or could enter, the heart of her who knelt with me, in presence of many now here, before that Throne, I will vouch by all the symbols we revere in common, and with the life which it seems is alone threatened by the feminine domestic treason alleged, from whomsoever that treason may proceed. I will accuse none, as I suspect none; but I will say that the

charge might be true to the letter, and yet not touch, as I know it does not justly touch, the daughter of our Chief."

A deep relief was visible in the faces which had so lately been clouded by a suspicion terrible to all. Esmo's alone remained impassive throughout my vindication, as throughout the apparent accusation and silent condemnation of his daughter.

"Has any brother," he said, "counsel to speak respecting the question actually before us?"

One and all were silent, till Esmo again put the formal question:—

"Has he who was our brother betrayed the brotherhood?"

From every member of the assembly came a clear unmistakable assent.

"Is he outcast?"

Silence rather than any distinct sign answered in the affirmative.

"Is it needful that his lips be sealed for ever?"

One or two of the Chiefs expressed in a single sentence an affirmative conviction, which was evidently shared by all present except myself. Appealing by a look to Esmo, and encouraged by his eye, I spoke—

"The outcast has confessed treason worthy of death. That I cannot deny. But he has sinned from fear rather than from greed or malice; and to fear, courage should be indulgent. The coward is but what Allah has made him, and to punish cowardice is to punish the child for the heritage his parents have inflicted. Moreover, no example of punishment will make cowards brave. It seems to me, then, that there is neither justice

nor wisdom in taking vengeance upon the crime of weakness."

In but two faces, those of Esmo and of his next colleague on the left, could I see the slightest sign of approval. One of the other chiefs answered briefly and decisively my plea for mercy.

"If," he said, "treason proceed from fear, the more cause that a greater fear should prevent the treason of cowardice for the future. The same motives that have led the offender to betray so much would assuredly lead him to betray more were he released; and to attempt lifelong confinement is to make the lives of all dependent on a chance in order to spare one unworthy life. The excuse which our brother has pleaded may, we hope, avail with a tribunal which can regard the conscience apart from the consequences. It ought not to avail with us."

But the law of the Zinta, as I now learned, will not allow sentence of death to be passed save by an absolutely unanimous vote. It is held that if one judge educated in the ideas of the Order, appreciating to the full the priceless importance of its teaching and the guilt of treason against it, is unpersuaded that there exists sufficient cause for the supreme penalty, the doubt is such as should preclude the infliction of that penalty. It is, however, permitted and expected that the dissentients, if few in number, much more a single dissentient, shall listen attentively and give the most respectful and impartial consideration to the arguments of brethren, and especially of seniors. If a single mind remains unmoved, its dissent is decisive. But it would be the gravest dereliction of duty to persist from wil-

fulness, obstinacy, or pride, in adhesion to a view perhaps hastily expressed in opposition to authority and argument. The debate to which my speech gave rise lasted for two hours. Each speaker spoke but a few terse expressive sentences ; and after each speech came a pause allowing full time for the consideration of its reasoning. Two points were very soon made clear to all. The offender had justly forfeited his life ; and if his death were necessary or greatly conducive to the safety of the rest, the mercy which for his sake imperilled worthier men and sacred truths would have been no less than a crime. The thought, however, that weighed most with me against my natural feeling was an experience to which none present could appeal. I had sat on many courts-martial where cowardice was the only charge imputed ; and in every case in which that charge was proved, sentence of death had been passed and carried out on a ground I could not refuse to consider sufficient :—namely, that the infection of terror can best be repressed by an example inspiring deeper terror than that to which the prisoner has yielded. Compelled by these precedents, though with intense reluctance, I submitted at last to the universal judgment. Esmo having collected the will, I cannot say the voices, of the assembly, paused for a minute in silence.

“The Present has pronounced,” he said at last. “Are the voices of the Past assentient ?”

He looked around as if to see whether, under real or supposed inspiration, any of those before him would give in another name a judgment opposite to that in which all had concurred. Instinctively I glanced to-

wards the Throne, but it remained vacant as ever. Then, fixing his eyes for a few moments upon the culprit, who started and woke to full consciousness under his gaze—and receiving from the Chief nearest to him on the left a chain of small golden circles similar to that of the canopy, represented also on the Signet, while he on the right held a small roll, on the golden surface of which a long list of names was inscribed—our Superior pronounced, amid deepest stillness, in a low clear tone, the form of excommunication; breaking at the appropriate moment one link from the chain, and, at a later point, drawing a broad crimson bar through one cipher on the roll :—

“ Conscience-convict, tried in truth,
Judged in justice, doomed in ruth;
Ours no more—once ours in vain—
Falls the Veil and snaps the Chain,
Drops the link and lies alone :—
Traitor to the Emerald Throne,
Alien from the troth we plight,
Nature native to the night;
Trained in Light the Light to scorn,
Soul apostate and forsworn,
False to symbol, sense, and sign,
To the Serpent’s pledge divine,
To the Wings that reach afar,
To the Circle and the Star ;
Recreant to the mystic rule,
Outlaw from the sacred school—
Backward is the Threshold crossed ;
Lost the Light, the Life is lost.
Go ; the golden page we blot :
Go ; forgetting and forgot !
Go—by final sentence shriven,
Be thy crime absolved in Heaven ! ”

Once more the Throne and the Emblems behind and

above it had been veiled in impenetrable darkness. Instinctively, as it seemed, every one present had risen to his feet, and stood with bent head and downcast-eyes as the Condemned, rising mechanically, turned without a word and passed away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TWILIGHT.

I WAS, perhaps, the only member of the assembly to whom the doomed man was not personally known, and to all of us the tie which had been severed was one at least as close as that of natural brotherhood on Earth.

How long the pause lasted—how, or why, or when we resumed our seats, even I knew not. The Shrine was unveiled, and Esmo's next colleague spoke again—

“A seat among the elders has been three days vacant by the departure of one well known and dear to all. His colleagues have considered how best it may be filled. The member they have selected is of the youngest in experience here; but from the first moment of his initiation it was evident to us that more than half the learning of the Starlight had been his before. Nothing could so deeply confirm our joy and confidence in that lore, as to find that in another world the truths we hold dearest are held with equal faith, that many of our deepest secrets have there been sought and discovered by societies not unlike our own. For that reason, and because of that House, whereof now but two members are left us, he is by wedlock and adoption the

third, the elder brethren have unanimously resolved to recommend to Clavelta, and to the Children of the Star, that this seat," and he pointed to the vacant place, "shall be filled by him who has but now expressed, with a warmth seldom shown in this place, his love and trust for the daughter of our Chief, the descendant of our Founder."

Certainly not on my own account, but from the earnest attachment and devotion they felt for Esmo, both personally as a long-tried and deservedly revered Chief, and as almost the last representative of a lineage so profoundly loved and honoured, the approval of all present was expressed with a sudden and eager warmth which deeply affected me; the more that it expressed an hereditary regard and esteem, not for myself but for Eveena, rarely or never, even among the Zveltan, paid to a woman. Esmo bent his head in assent, and then, addressing me by name, called me to the foot of the platform.

He held in his hand the golden sash and rose-coloured wand which marked the rank about to be bestowed on me. I felt very deeply my own incompetence and ignorance; and even had I valued more the proffered honour, I should have been bound to decline it. But at the third word I spoke, I was silenced with a stern though perfectly calm severity. Flinging back the fold of his robe that covered his left arm, with a gesture that placed the Signet full before my eyes, he said—

"You have sworn obedience."

A soldier's instinct or habit, the mesmeric command of Esmo's glance, and the awe, due less to my own feeling than to the infectious reverence of others, which the

symbols and the oaths of the Order extorted, left me no further will to resist. At the foot of the Throne I received the investiture of my new rank; and as I rose and faced my brethren, every hand was lifted to the lips, every head bent in salutation of their new leader. Then, as I passed to the extreme place on the right, they came forward to grasp my hand and utter a few words of sympathy and kindness, in which a frank spirit of affectionate comradeship, that reminded me forcibly of the mess-tent and the bivouac fire, was mingled with the sense of a deeper and more sacred tie.

Scarcely had we resumed our places than a startling incident gave a new turn to the scene. Approaching the barrier, a woman, veiled, but wearing the sash and star, knelt for a moment to the presence of the Arch-Teacher, and then, as the barrier was thrown open by the sentries, came up to the dais.

"She," said the new-comer, "has a message for you, Clavelta, for your Council, and particularly for the last of its members."

"It is well," he answered.

The messenger took her seat among the Initiates, and Esmo dismissed the assembly in the solemn form employed on the former occasion. Then, followed by the twelve, and guided by the messenger (the gloved fingers of whose left hand, as I observed, he very slightly touched with his own right), he passed by another door out of the Hall, and along one of the many passages of the subterrene Temple, into a chamber resembling in every respect an apartment in an ordinary residence. Here, with her veil, as is permitted only to maidenhood, drawn back from her face, but covering almost entirely

her neck and bosom, and clad in the vestal white, reclined with eyes nearly closed a young girl, in whose countenance a beauty almost spiritual was enhanced rather than marred by signs of physical ill-health painfully unmistakable. Warning us back with a slight movement of his hand, Esmo approached her. Our presence had at first seemed to cast her into almost convulsive agitation; but under his steady gaze and the movement of his hands, she lapsed almost instantly into what appeared to be profound slumber.

The practical information that concerned the present peril menacing the Order delivered, and when it was plain that no further revelation or counsel was to be expected on this all-important topic, Esmo beckoned to me, taking my hand in his own and placing it very gently and carefully in that of the unconscious sybil. The effect, however, was startling. Without unclosing her eyes, she sprang into a sitting posture and clasped my hand almost convulsively with her own long, thin, all but transparent fingers. Turning her face to mine, and seeming, though her eyes were closed, as if she looked intently into it, she murmured words at first unintelligible, but which seemed by degrees to bear clearer and clearer reference to some of the stormy scenes of my youth in another world. Then—as one looking upon pictures but partially intelligible to her, and commenting on them as a girl who had never seen or known the passions and the mutual enmity of men—she startled me by breaking into the kind of chant in which the peculiar verse of her language is commonly delivered. My own thought of the moment was not her

guide. The Moslem battle-cry had rung too often in my ears ever to be forgotten ; but up to that moment I had never recalled to memory the words in which on my last field I retorted upon my Arab comrades, when flinching from a third charge against those terrible "sons of Eblis," whose stubborn courage had already twice hurled us back in confusion and disgrace with a hundred empty saddles. At first her tone was one of simple amaze and horror. It softened afterwards into wonder and perplexity, and the oft-repeated rebuke or curse was on its last recurrence spoken with more of pitying tenderness and regret than of severity :—

"What ! those are human bosoms whereon the brute hath trod !
What ! through the storm of slaughter rings the appeal to God !
Through the smoke and flash of battle a single form is shown ;
O'er clang and crash and rattle peals out one trumpet-tone—
'Strike, for Allah and the Prophet ! let Eblis take his own !'

"Strange ! the soul that, fresh from carnage, quailed not alone to face
The unfathomed depths of Darkness, the solitudes of Space !
Strange ! the smile of scorn, while nerveless dropped the sword-arm
from the sting,
On the death that scowled at distance, on the closing murder-ring.
Strange ! no crimson stain on conscience from the hand in gore
imbrued !
But Death haunts the death-dealer ; blood taints the life of blood !

"Strange ! the arm that smote and spared not in the tempest of the
strife,
Quivers with pitying terror—clings, for a maiden's life !
Strange ! the heart steel-hard to death-shrieks by girlish tears
subdued ;
The falcon's sheathless talons among the *ewe's* brood !
But Death haunts the death-dealer ; blood taints the life of blood.

"The breast for woman's peril that dared the despot's ire,
Shall dauntless front, and scathless, the closing curve of fire.
The heart, by household treason stung home, that can forgive,
Shall brave a woman's hatred, a woman's wiles, and live.

"A woman's well-won fealty shall give the life he gave,
Love shall redeem the loving, and Sacrifice shall save.
But—God heal the tortured spirit, God calm the maddened mood ;
For Death haunts the death-dealer ; blood taints the life of blood !"

Relaxing but not releasing her grasp of my own hand, she felt about with her left till Esmo gently placed his own therein. Then, in a tone at first of deep and passionate anxiety and eagerness, passing into one of regretful admiration, and varying with the purport of each utterance, she broke into another chant, in which were repeated over and again phrases familiar in the traditions and prophetic or symbolic formularies of the Zinta :—

"Ever on deadliest peril shines the Star with steadiest ray ;
Ever quail the fiercest hunters when Kargynda turns at bay.
Close, Children of the Starlight! close, for the Emerald Throne !
Close round the life that closeth your life within the zone!
Rests the Golden Circle's glory, rests the silver gleam on her
Who shall rein Kargynda's fury with a thread of gossamer.
He metes not mortal measure, He pays not human price,
Who crowns that life's devotion with the death of sacrifice !
Woe worth the moment's panic ; woe worth the victory won !
But the Night is near the breaking when the Stranger claims his own.

"Ever on deadliest peril shines the Star with steadiest ray ;
Ever quail the fiercest hunters when Kargynda turns at bay.
No life is worth the living that counts each fleeting breath ;
No eyes from God averted can meet the eyes of Death.
Vague fear and spectral terrors haunt the soul that dwells in shade,
Nor e'er can crimson conscience confront the crimson blade.
From a cloud of shame and sorrow breaks the Light that shines afar,
And cold and dark the household spark that lit the Silver Star.
The triumph is a death-march ; the victor's voice a moan :—
But the Powers of Night are broken when the Stranger wins his own !

"Ever in blackest midnight shines the Star with brightest ray ;
Woe to them that hunt the therne if Kargynda cross the way !

In the Home of Peace, Clavelta, can our fears thy spirit move ?
Look down ! whence comes the rescue to the household of thy love ?
As the All-Commander's lightning falls the Vengeance from above !
A shriek from thousand voices ; a thunder crash ; a groan ;
A thousand homes in mourning—a thousand deaths in one !
Woe to the Sons of Darkness, for the Stranger wields his own !
Oh, hide that scene of horror in the deepest shades of night !
Look upward to the welkin, where the Vessel fades from sight. . .
But the Veil is rent for ever by the Hand that veiled the Shrine ;
And, on a peace of ages, the Star of Peace shall shine ! ”

Esmo listened with the anxious attention of one who believed that her every word had a real and literal meaning ; and his face was overclouded with a calm but deep sadness, which testified to the nature of the impression made on his mind by language that hardly conveyed to my own more than a dim and general prediction of victory, won through scenes of trial and trouble. But when she had closed, a quiet satisfaction in what seemed to be the final promise of triumph to the Star, at whatever cost to the noblest of its adherents, was all that I could trace in his countenance.

The sibyl fell back as the last word passed her lips, with a sigh of relief, into what was evidently a profound and insensible sleep. Those around me must have witnessed such scenes at least as often as I ; but it was plain that the impression made, even on the experienced Chiefs of the Order, was far deeper than had affected myself. I should hardly have been able to remember the words of the prophecy, but for subsequent conversation thereon with Eveena, when one part had been fulfilled and the rest was on the eve of a too terribly truthful fulfilment ; but for the events that fixed their prediction in my mind—it may be in terms

a little more precise than those actually employed, though I have endeavoured to record these with conscientious accuracy.

Led by Esmo, we passed along another gallery into the small chamber where met the secret Council of the Order, and long and anxious were the debates wherein the revelations of the dreamer were treated as conveying the most certain and unquestionable warning. The first rays of morning were stealing through the mists into the peristyle of our host's dwelling before I re-entered Eveena's chamber. She was slumbering, but restlessly, and so lightly that she sprang up at once on my entrance. For a few moments all other thought was lost in the delight of my return after an absence whose very length had alarmed her, despite her father's previous assurance. But as at last she drew back sufficiently to look into my face, its expression seemed to startle and sadden her. The questions that sprang to her lips died there, as she probably saw in my eyes a look not only of weariness and perplexity, but of profound reluctance to speak of what had passed. Expressing her sympathy only by look and touch, she began to unclasp my robe at the throat, aware that my only wish was for rest, and content to postpone her own anxiety and natural curiosity. Then, as the golden sash which I had not removed met her sight, she looked up for a moment with a glance of natural pride and fondness, intensely gratified by the highly-prized honour paid to her husband; then bent low and kissed my hand with the gesture wherewith the presence of a superior is acknowledged by the members of the Order.

“Used as my earlier life was, Eveena, to the Eastern prostrations of my own world, I hate all that recalls them; and if I must accept, as I fulfil, these forms in the Halls of the Zinta, let me never be reminded of them by you.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

IF I could have endured to describe to Eveena the terrible trial scene, that which occurred before she had the chance to question me would have certainly sealed my lips. The past night had told upon me as no fatigue, no anxiety, no disaster of my life on Earth had ever done. I awoke faint and exhausted as a nervous valetudinarian, and I suppose my feeling must have been plainly visible in my face, for Eveena would not allow me to rise from the cushions till she had summoned an *amba* and procured the material of a morning meal, though the hour was noon. Far too considerate to question me then, she was perhaps a little disappointed that, almost before I had dressed, a message from her father summoned me to his presence.

"It is right," he said quietly, and with no show of feeling, though his face was somewhat pale, "that you should be acquainted with the fulfilment of the sentence you assisted to pass. The outcast was found this morning dead in his own chamber. Nay, you need not start! We need no deathsman; alike by sudden disease, by suicide, by accident, our doom executes itself. But

enough of this. I accepted the vote which invested you with the second rank in our Order, less because I think you will render service to it here than that I desired you to possess that entire knowledge of its powers and secrets which might enable you to plant a branch or offshoot where none but you could carry it. . . . That you will soon leave this world seemed to me probable, before the anticipations of practical prudence were confirmed by the voice of prophecy. Your Astronaut shall be stored with all of which I know you have need, and with any materials whose use I do not know that you may point out. To remove it from Asnyca would now be too dangerous. If you receive tidings that shall bring you again into its neighbourhood, do not lose the opportunity of re-entering it. . . . And now let me take leave of you, as of a dear friend I may not meet again."

"Do you know," I said, more touched by the tone than by the words, "that Eveena asked and I gave a promise that when I do re-enter it she shall be my companion?"

"I did not know it, but I took for granted that she would desire it, and I should have been grieved to doubt that you would assent. I cannot disturb her peace by saying to her what I have just said to you, and must part from her as on any ordinary occasion."

That parting, happily, I did not witness. Before evening we re-entered our vessel, and returned home without any incident worthy of mention.

To my surprise, my return plunged me at once into the kind of vexation which Eveena had so anxiously endeavoured to spare me, and which I had hoped

Eunane's greater decision and less exaggerated tenderness would have avoided. She seemed excited and almost fretful, and before we had been half an hour at home had greeted me with a string of complaints which, on her own showing, seemed frivolous, and argued as much temper on her part as customary petulance on that of others. On one point, however, her report confirmed the suggestions of Eveena's previous experience. She had wrested at once from Eivé's hand the pencil that had hitherto been used in absolute secrecy, and the consequent quarrel had been sharp enough to suggest, if not to prove, that the privilege was of practical as well as sentimental moment. Though aggravated by no rebuke, my tacit depreciation of her grievances irritated Eunane to an extreme of petulance unusual with her of late; which I bore so long as it was directed against myself, but which, turned at last on Eveena, wholly exhausted my patience. But no sooner had I dismissed the offender than Eveena herself interposed, with even more than her usual tenderness for Eunane.

"Do not blame my presumption," she said; "do not think that I am merely soft or weak, if I entreat you to take no further notice of Eunane's mood. I cannot but think that, if you do, you will very soon repent it."

She could not or would not give a reason for her intercession; but some little symptoms I might have seen without observing, some perception of the exceptional character of Eunane's outbreak, or some unacknowledged misgiving accordant with her own, made me more than willing to accept Eveena's wish as a sufficient cause for forbearance. When we assembled at the morning meal Eunane appeared to be conscious of error; at all events,

her manner and temper were changed. Watching her closely, I thought that neither shame for an outbreak of unwonted extravagance nor fear of my displeasure would account for her languor and depression. But illness is so rare among a race educated for countless generations on principles scientifically sound and sanitary, inheriting no seeds of disease from their ancestry, and safe from the infection of epidemics long extirpated, that no apprehension of serious physical cause for her changes of temper and complexion entered into my mind. To spare her when she deserved no indulgence was the surest way to call forth Eunane's best impulses; and I was not surprised to find her, soon after the party had dispersed, in Eveena's chamber. That all the amends I could desire had been made and accepted was sufficiently evident. But Eunane's agitation was so violent and persistent, despite all Eveena's soothing, that I was at last seriously apprehensive of its effect upon the latter. The moment we were alone Eveena said—

"I have never seen illness, but if Eunane is not ill, and very ill, all I have gathered in my father's household from such books as he has allowed me, and from his own conversation, deceives me wholly; and yet no illness of which I have ever heard in the slightest degree resembles this."

"I take it to be," I said, "what on Earth women call hysteria and men temper."

To this opinion, however, I could not adhere when, watching her closely, I noticed the evident lack of spirit and strength with which the most active and energetic member of the household went about her usual pursuits. A terrible suspicion at first entered my mind,

but was wholly discountenanced by Eveena, who insisted that there was no conceivable motive for an attempt to injure Eunane; while the idea that mischief designed for others had unintentionally fallen on her was excluded by the certainty that, whatever the nature of her illness, if it were such, it had commenced before our return. Long before evening I had communicated with Esmo, and received from him a reply which, though exceedingly unsatisfactory, rather confirmed Eveena's impression. The latter had taken upon herself the care of the evening meal; but, before we could meet there, my own observation had suggested an alarm I dared not communicate to her—one which a wider experience than hers could neither verify nor dispel. Among symptoms wholly alien, there were one or two which sent a thrill of terror to my heart;—which reminded me of the most awful and destructive of the scourges wherewith my Eastern life had rendered me but too familiar. It was not unnatural that, if carried to a new world, that fearful disease should assume a new form; but how could it have been conveyed? how, if conveyed, could its incubation in some unknown vehicle have been so long? and how had it reached one, and one only, of my household—one, moreover, who had no access to such few relics of my own world as I had retained, of which Eveena had the exclusive charge? All Esmo's knowledge, even were he within reach, could hardly help me here. I dared, of course, suggest my apprehension to no one, least of all to the patient herself. As, towards evening, her languor was again exchanged for the feverish excitement of the previous night, I seized on some petulant word as an excuse to confine her to her

room, and, selfishly enough, resolved to invoke the help of the only member of the family who should, and perhaps would, be willing to run personal risk for the sake of aiding Eunane in need and protecting Eveena. I had seen as yet very little of Velna, Eunane's school companion; but now, calling her apart, I told her frankly that I feared some illness of my own Earth had by some means been communicated to her friend.

"You have here," I said, "for ages had no such diseases as those which we on Earth most dread; those which, communicated through water, air, or solid particles, spread from one person to another, endangering especially those who come nearest to the sufferers. Whoever approaches Eunane risks all that I fear for her, and that 'all' means very probably speedy death. To leave her alone is impossible; and if I cannot report that she is fully cared for in other hands, no command, nothing short of actual compulsion, will keep Eveena away from her."

The girl looked up with a steady frank courage and unaffected readiness I had not expected.

"I owe you much, Clafempta, and still more perhaps to Eveena. My life is not so precious that I should not be ready to give it at need for either of you; and if I should lose Eunane, I would prefer not to live to remember my loss."

The last words reminded me that to her who spoke death meant annihilation; a fact which has deprived the men of her race of nearly every vestige of the calm courage now displayed by this young girl, indebted as little as any human being could be to the insensible influences of home affection, or the direct moral teach-

ing which is sometimes supposed to be a sufficient substitute. I led her at once into her friend's chamber, and a single glance satisfied me that my apprehensions were but too well-founded. Remaining long enough to assure the sufferer that the displeasure I had affected had wholly passed away, and to suggest the only measures of relief rather than of remedy that occurred to me, I endeavoured for a few moments to collect my thoughts and recover the control of my nerves in solitude. In my own chamber Eveena would assuredly have sought me, and I chose therefore one of those as yet unoccupied. It did not take long to convince me that no ordinary resources at my command, no medical experience of my own, no professional science existing among a race who probably never knew the disease in question, and had not for ages known anything like it, could avail me. My later studies in the occult science of Eastern schools had not furnished me with any antidote in which I believed on Earth, and if they had, it was not here available. Despair rather than hope suggested an appeal to those which the analogous secrets of the Starlight might afford. Anxiety, agitation, personal interest so powerful as now disturbed me, are generally fatal to the exercise of the powers recently placed at my command; so recently that, but for Terrestrial experience, I should hardly have known how to use them. But the arts which assist in and facilitate that tremendous all-absorbing concentration of will on which the exertion of those powers depends, are far more fully developed in the Zveltic science than in its Earthly analogues. A desperate effort, aided by those arts, at last controlled my thoughts, and turned

them from the sick-room to that distant chamber in which I had so lately stood.

I seemed to stand beside her, and at once to be aware that my thought was visible to the closed eyes. From lips paler than ever, words—so generally resembling those I had previously heard that some readers may think them the mere recollection thereof—appeared to reach my sense or my mind as from a great distance, spoken in a tone of mingled pity, promise, and reproof:—

“What is youth or sex or beauty in the All-Commander's sight?

For the arm that smote and spared not, shall His wisdom spare to smite?

Yet, love redeems the loving; yet in thy need avail

The Soul whose light surrounds thee, the faith that will not fail.

Thy lips shall soothe the terror, call to yon couch afar

The solace of the Serpent, the shadow of the Star!

Strength shall sustain the strengthless, nor the soft hand loose its grasp

Of the hand it trusts and clings to—till another meet its clasp. . . .

—Steel-hard to man's last anguish, wax-soft to woman's mood!—

Death quits not the death-dealer; blood haunts the life of blood!”

Returning to the peristyle, I encountered Eveena, who had been seeking me anxiously. Much alarmed for her, I bade her return at once to her room. She obeyed as of course, equally of course surprised and a little mortified; while I, marvelling by what conceivable means the plague of Cairo or Constantinople could have been conveyed across forty million miles of space and some two years of Earthly time, paced the peristyle for a few minutes. As I did so, my eye fell on the roses which grew just where chance arrested my steps. If they do not afford an explanation which scientific

medicine will admit, I can suggest no other. But, if it were so, how fearfully true the warning!—by what a mysterious fate did death dog my footsteps, and “blood haunt the life of blood!”

The reader may not remember that the central chamber of the women’s apartments, next to which was Eunane’s, had been left vacant. This I determined to occupy myself, and bade the girls remove at once to those on its right, as yet unallotted. I closed the room, threw off my dress, and endeavoured by means of the perfumed shower-bath to drive from my person what traces of the infection might cling to it; for Eveena had the keys of all my cases and of the medicine-chest, and I could not make up my mind to reclaim them by a simple unexplained message sent by an amba, or, still worse, by the hands of Enva or Eivé. I laid the clothes I had worn on one of the shelves of the wall, closing over them the crystal doors of the sunken cupboard; and, having obtained through the ambau a dress which I had not worn since my return, and which therefore could hardly have about it any trace of infection, I sought Eveena in her own room.

That something had gone wrong, and gravely wrong, she could not but know; and I found her silent and calm, indeed, but weeping bitterly, whether for the apprehension of danger to me, or for what seemed want of trust in her. I asked her for the keys, and she gave them; but with a mute appeal that made the concealment I desired, however necessary, no longer possible. Gently, cautiously as I could, but softening, not hiding, any part of the truth, I gave her the full confidence to which she was entitled, and which, once forced out of

the silence preserved for her sake, it was an infinite relief to give. If I could not observe equal gentleness of word and manner in absolutely forbidding her to approach either Eunane's chamber or my own, it was because, the moment she conceived what I was about to say, her almost indignant revolt from the command was apparent. For the first and last time she distinctly and firmly refused compliance, not merely with the kindly though very decided request at first spoken, but with the formal and peremptory command by which I endeavoured to enforce it.

"You command me to neglect a sister in peril and suffering," she said. "It is not kind; it is hardly worthy of you; but my first duty is to you, and you have the right, if you will, to insist that I shall reserve my life for your sake. But you command me also to forsake *you* in danger and in sorrow; and nothing but the absolute force you may of course employ shall compel me to obey you in that."

"I understand you, Eveena; and you, in your turn, must think and feel that I intend to express neither displeasure nor pain; that I mean no harshness to you, no less respect as well as love than I have always shown you, when I say that obey you shall; that the same sense of duty which impels you to refuse obliges me to enforce my command. At no time would I have allowed you to risk your life where others might be available. But if you were the only one who could help, I should, under other circumstances, have felt that the same paramount duty that attaches to me attached in a lighter degree to yourself. Now, as you well know, the case is different; and even were Eunane

not quite safe in my hands and in Velna's, you must not run a risk that can be avoided. You will promise me to remain on this side the peristyle or in the further half of it, or I must confine you perforce; and it is not kind or right in this hour of trouble to impose upon me so painful a task."

With every tone, look, and caress that could express affection and sympathy, Eveena answered—

"Do what seems your duty, and do not think that I misunderstand your motive or feel the shadow of humiliation or unkindness. Make me obey if you can, punish me if I disobey; but obey you, when you tell me, for my own life's sake or for any other, to desert you in the hour of need, of danger, and of sorrow, I neither will nor can."

I cut short the scene, bidding her a passionate farewell in view of the probability that we should not meet again. I closed the door behind me, having called her whom at this moment and in this case I could best trust, because her worse as well as her better qualities were alike guarantees for her obedience.

"Enva," I said, "you will keep this room till I release you; and you will answer it to me, as the worst fault you can commit, if Eveena passes this threshold, under whatever circumstances, until I give her permission, or until, if it be beyond my power to give it, her father takes the responsibilities of my home upon himself."

I procured the sedatives which might relieve the suffering I could not hope to cure. I wrote to Esmo, stating briefly but fully the position as I conceived it; and, on a suggestion from Eivé, I despatched another message to a female physician of some repute—one of those few women in Mars who lead the life and do the

work of men, and for whose attendance, as I remembered, Eunane had expressed a strong theoretical preference.

From that time I scarcely left her chamber save for a few minutes, and Velna remained constantly at her friend's side, save when, to give her at least a chance of escape, I sent her to her room to bathe, change her dress, and seek the fresh air for the half hour during which alone I could persuade her to leave the sufferer. The *claftare* (man-woman) physician came, but on learning the nature of the disease, expressed intense indignation that she had been summoned to a position of so much danger to herself.

I answered by a contemptuous inquiry regarding the price for which she would run so much risk as to remain in the peristyle so long as I might have need of her presence; and, for a fee which would ensure her a life-income as large as that secured to Eveena herself, she consented to remain within speaking distance for the few hours in which the question must be decided. Eunane was seldom insensible or even delirious, and her quick intelligence caught very speedily the meaning of my close attendance, and of the distress which neither Velna nor I could wholly conceal. She asked and extracted from me what I knew of the origin of her illness, and answered, with a far stronger feeling than I should have expected even from her—

"If I am to die, I am glad it should be through trying to serve and please Eveena. . . . It may seem strange, *Clasfempta*," she went on presently, "scarcely possible perhaps; but my love for her is not only greater than the love I bear you, but is so bound up with it that I always think of you together, and love

you the better that I love her, and that you love her so much better than me. . . . But," she resumed later, "it is hard to die, and die so young. I had never known what happiness meant till I came here. . . . I have been so happy here, and I was happier each day in feeling that I no longer made Eveena or you less happy. Ah! let me thank you and Eveena while I can for everything, and above all for Velna. . . . But," after another long pause, "it is terrible and horrible—never to wake, to move, to hear your voices, to see you, to look upon the sunlight, to think, or even to dream again! Once, to remove a tooth and straighten the rest, they made me senseless; and that sinking into senselessness, though I knew I should waken in a minute, was horrible; and—to sink into senselessness from which I shall never waken!"

She was sinking fast indeed, and this terror of death, so seldom seen in the dying, grew apparently deeper and more intense as death drew near. I could not bear it, and at last took my resolve and dismissed Velna, forbidding her to return till summoned.

"Ah!" said Eunane, "you send her away that she may not see the last. Is it so near?"

"No, darling!" I replied (she, like Eveena, had learnt the meaning of one or two expressions of human affection in my own tongue), "but I have that to say which I would not willingly say in her presence. You dread death not as a short terrible pain, and for you it will not be so, not as a short sleep, but as eternal senselessness and nothingness. Has it never seemed to you strange that, loving Eveena as I do, I do not fear to die? Though you did not know it, I have lived almost since

first you knew me under the threat of death ; and death sudden, secret, without warning, menacing me every day and every hour. And yet, though death meant leaving her and leaving her to a fate I could not foresee, I have been able to look on it steadily. Kneeling here, I know that I am very probably giving my life to the same end as yours. I do not fear. That may not seem strange to you ; but Eveena knows all I know, and I could scarcely keep Eveena away. So loving each other, *we* do not fear to die, because we believe, we know, that that in us which thinks, and feels, and loves will live ; that in death we lay aside the body as we lay aside our worn-out clothing. If I thought otherwise, Eunane, I could not bear *this* parting."

She clasped my hands, almost as much surprised and touched, I thought, for the moment by the expression of an affection of which till that hour neither of us were fully aware, as by the marvellous and incredible assurance she had heard.

" Ah ! " she said, " I have heard her people are strange, and they dream such things. No, Clafempta, it is a fancy, or you say it to comfort me, not because it is true."

The expression of terror that again came over her face was too painful for endurance. To calm that terror I would have broken every oath, have risked every penalty. But in truth I could never have paused to ask what in such a case oath or law permitted.

" Listen, Eunane," I said, " and be calm. Not only Eveena, not only I, but hundreds, thousands, of the best and kindest men and women of your world hold this faith as fast as we do. You feel what Eveena is. What

she is and what others are not, she owes to this trust:—to the assurance of a Power unseen, that rules our lives and fortunes and watches our conduct, that will exact an account thereof, that holds us as His children, and will never part with us. Do you think it is a lie that has made Eveena what she is?"

"But you *think*, you do not know."

"Yes, I know; I have seen." Here a touch, breaking suddenly upon that intense concentration of mind and soul on a single thought, violently startled me, gentle as it was; and to my horror I saw that Eveena was kneeling with me by the couch.

"Remember," she said, in the lowest, saddest whisper, "the Veil that guards the Shrine."

"No matter, Eveena," I answered in the same tone, the pain at my heart suppressing even the impulse of indignation, not with her, but with the law that could put such a thought into her heart. "Neither penalty nor oath should silence me now. Whether I break our law I know not; but I would forfeit life here—I would forfeit life hereafter, rather than fail a soul that rests on mine at such a moment."

The clasp of her hand showed how thoroughly, despite the momentary doubt, she felt with me; and I could not now recur to that secondary selfishness which had so imperiously repelled her from the sick-chamber.

"I have seen," I repeated, as Eunane still looked earnestly into my face, "and Eveena has seen at the same moment, one long ages since departed this world—the Teacher of this belief, the Founder of that Society which holds it, the ancestor of her own house—in bodily form before us."

"It is true," said Eveena, in answer to Eunane's appealing look.

"And I," I added, "have seen more than once in my own world the forms of those I have known in life recalled, according to promise, to human eyes."

The testimony, or the contagion of the strong undoubting confidence we felt therein, if they did not convince the intellect, changed the tone of thought and feeling of the dying girl. Too weak now to reason, or to resist the impression enforced upon her mind by minds always far more powerful than her own in its brightest hours, she turned instinctively from the thought of blackness, senselessness eternal, to that of a Father whose hand could uphold, of the wings that can leap the grave. Her left hand clasped in mine, her right in Eveena's,—looking most in my face, because weakness leant on strength even more than love appealed to love—Eunane spent the remaining hours of that night in calm contentment and peace. Perhaps they were among the most perfectly peaceful and happy she had known. To strong, warm, sheltering affection she had never been used save in her new home; and in the love she received and returned there was much too strange and self-contradicting to be satisfactory. But no shadow of jealousy, doubt, or contradictory emotion troubled her now: assured of Eveena's sisterly love as of my own hardly and lately won trust and tenderness.

The light had been long subdued, and the chamber was dim as dimmest twilight, when suddenly, with a smile, Eunane cried—

"It is morning already! and there,—why, there is Erme."

She stretched out her arms as if to greet the one creature she had loved—perhaps more dearly than she loved those now beside her. The hands dropped; and Eveena's closed for ever on the sights of this world the eyes whose last vision had been of another.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DARKER YET.

LEADING Eveena from the room, I hastily dictated every precaution that could diminish the danger to her and others. Velna had run risks that could not well be increased, and on her and on myself must devolve what remained to be done. I sent an amba to summon Davilo, gathered the garments that Eveena had thrown off, and removed them to the death-chamber. When the first arrangements were made, and I had paid the fee of Astona, the woman-physician, I passed out into the garden, and Davilo met me at the door of the peristyle. A few words explained all that was necessary. It was still almost dark; and as we stood close by the door, speaking in the low tone partly of sadness, partly of precaution, two figures were dimly discernible just inside, and we caught a few broken words.

"You have heard," said a harsh voice, which seemed to be Astona's, "there is no doubt now. You have your part to play, and can do it quickly and safely."

I paid little attention to words whose dangerous significance would at another moment have been plain to me. But Davilo, greatly alarmed, laid his hand

upon my arm. As he did so, another voice thrilled me with intensest pain and amazement.

"Be quick to bear your message," Eivé said, in rapid guarded tones. "They have means of vengeance certain and prompt, and they never spare."

Astona departed without seeing us. Eivé closed the door, and Davilo and I, hastily and unperceived, followed the spy to the gate of the enclosure. Some one waited for her there. What passed we could not hear; but, as we saw Astona and another depart, Davilo spoke imprudently aloud—

"She has the secret, and she must die. "Nay" (as I would have expostulated), "she is spy, traitress, and assassin, and merits her doom most richly."

"Hist!" said I, "your words may have fallen into other ears;" for I thought that beyond the wall I discerned a crouching figure. If that of a man, however, it was too far off, and dressed in colours too dark, to be clearly seen; and in another instant it had certainly vanished.

"Remember," he urged, "you have heard that one quite as dangerous is under your own roof; and, once more, it is not only *your* life that is at stake. What you call courage, what seems to us sheer folly, may cost you and others what you value far more than your life. An error of softness now may make your future existence one long and useless remorse."

Half-an-hour later, having warned the women to their rooms—ordering a variety of disinfecting measures in which Martial science excelled while they were needed there—I opened the door of the death chamber

to those who carried in a coffer hollowed out of a dark, exceedingly dense natural stone, and half-filled with a liquid of enormous destructive power. Then I lifted tenderly the lifeless form, laid it on cushions arranged therein, kissed the lips, and closed the coffer. Two of Davilo's attendants had meantime adjusted the electric machinery. We carried the coffer into the apartment where this worked to heat the stove, to keep the lights burning, to raise, warm, and diffuse the water through the house, and perform many other important household services. Two strong bars of conducting metal were attached to the apparatus, and fitted into two hollows of the coffer. A flash, a certain hissing sound, followed. After a few moments the coffer was opened, and Davilo, carefully gathering a few handfuls of solid white material, something resembling pumice stone in appearance, placed them in a golden chest about twelve inches cube, which was then soldered down by the heat derived from the electric power. Then all infected clothes and the contents of the death chamber were carried out for destruction; while, with a tool adjusted to the machinery, one of the attendants engraved a few characters upon the chest. Whatever the risk, I could not part with every relic of her we had lost; and, after passing them through such chemical purification as Martial science suggested, I took the three long chestnut locks I had preserved. Velna's quick fingers wove them into plaits, one of which I left with her, one bound around my own neck, and one reserved for Eveena. As soon as the sun had risen, I had despatched a message to the Prince, explaining the danger of infection to which I had been subjected, and asking permission notwithstanding to

wait upon him. The emergency was so pressing that neither sorrow nor peril would allow me to neglect an embassy on which the lives of hundreds, and perhaps the safety of his kingdom, might depend. Passing Eivé as I turned towards Eveena's room, and fevered with intense thirst, I bade her bring me thither a cup of the carcarâ. I need not dwell on the terribly painful moments in which I bound round Eveena's arm a bracelet prized above all the choicest ornaments she possessed. To calm her agitation and my own by means of the charny, I sought the keys. They were not at my belt, and I asked, "Have I returned them to you?"

"Certainly not," said Eveena, startled. "Can you not find them?"

At this moment Eivé entered the room and presented me with the cup for which I had asked. It struck me with surprise, even at that moment, that Eveena took it from my hand and carried it first to her own lips. Eivé had turned to leave the room; but before she had reached the threshold Eveena had sprung up, placed her foot upon the spring that closed the door, and snatching the test-stone from my watch chain dipped it into the cup. Her face turned white as death, while she held up to my eyes the discoloured disc which proved the presence of the deadliest Martial poison.

"Be calm," she said, as a cry of horror burst from my lips. "The keys!"

"*You* have them," Eivé said with a gasp, her face still averted.

"I took them from Eveena myself," I answered sternly. "Stand back into that corner, Eivé," as I

opened the door and called sharply the other members of the household. When they entered, unable to stand, I had fallen back upon a chair, and called Eivé to my side. As I laid my hand on her arm she threw herself on the floor, screaming and writhing like a terrified child rather than a woman detected in a crime, the conception and execution of which must have required an evil courage and determination happily seldom possessed by women.

"Stand up!" I said. "Lift her, then, Enva and Eirale. Unfasten the shoulder-clasps and zone."

As her outer robe dropped, Eivé snatched at an object in its folds, but too late; and the electric keys, which gave access to all my cases, papers, and to the medicine-chest above all, lay glittering on the ground.

"That cup Eivé brought to me. Which of you saw her?"

"I did," said Enva quietly, all feelings of malice and curiosity alike awed into silence by the evidence of some terrible, though as yet to them unknown, secret. "She mixed it and brought it hither herself."

"And," I said, "it contains a poison against which, had I drunk one-half the draught, no antidote could have availed—a poison to which these keys only could have given access."

Again the test-stone was applied, and again the discoloration testified to the truth of the charge.

"You have seen?" I said.

"We have seen," answered Enva, in the same tone of horror, too deep to be other than quiet.

We all left the room, closing the door upon the prisoner. Dismissing the girls to their own chambers,

with strict injunctions not to quit them unpermitted, I was left alone with Eveena. We were silent for some minutes, my own heart oppressed with mingled emotions, all intensely painful, but so confused that, while conscious of acute suffering, I scarcely realised anything that had occurred. Eveena, who knelt beside me, though deeply horror-struck, was less surprised and was far less agitated than I. At last, leaning forward with her arms on my knee and looking up in my face, she was about to speak. But the touch and look seemed to break a spell, and, shuddering from head to foot, I burst into tears like those of an hysterical girl. When, with the strongest effort that shame and necessity could prompt, aided by her silent soothing, I had somewhat regained my self-command, Eveena spoke, in the same attitude and with the same look:—

“You said once that you could pardon such an attempt. That you should ever forgive at heart cannot be. That punishment should not follow so terrible a crime, even I cannot desire. But for *my* sake, do not give her up to the doom she has deserved. Do you know” (as I was silent) “what that doom is?”

“Death, I suppose.”

“Yes!” she said, shuddering, “but death with torture—death on the vivisection-table. Will you, whatever the danger—*can* you, give up to such a fate, to such hands, one whom your hand has caressed, whose head has rested on your heart?”

“It needs not that, Eveena,” I answered; “enough that she is woman. I would face that death myself rather than, for whatever crime, send a woman, above all a young girl, to such an end. I would rather by far slay

my worst enemy with my own hand than consign him to a death of torture. But, more than that, my conscience would not permit me to call on the law to punish a household treason, where household authority is so strong and so arbitrary as here. Assassination is the weapon of the oppressed and helpless; and it is not for me so to be judge in my own cause as to pronounce that Eivé has had no provocation."

"Shame upon her!" said Eveena indignantly. "No one under your roof ever had or could have reason to raise a hand, I do not say against your life, but to give you a moment's pain. I do not ask, I do not wish you to spare her; only I am glad to think you will deal with her yourself—remember she has herself removed all limit to your power—and not by the shameless and merciless hands to which the law would give her."

We returned to Eveena's chamber. The scene that followed I cannot bear to recall. Enough that Eivé knew as well as Eveena the law she had broken and the penalty she had incurred; and, petted darling as she had been, she utterly lacked all faith in the tenderness she had known so well, or even in the mercy to which Eveena had confidently appealed. Understanding at last that she was safe from the law, the expression of her gratitude was as vehement as her terror had been intense. But the new phase of passion was not the less repugnant. Not that there was anything strange in the violent revulsion of feeling. Born and trained among a race who fear to forgive, Eivé was familiar by report at least with the merciless vengeance of cowards. Whatever they might have done later, few would have promised mercy in the very moment of escape

to an ordinary assassin; and if Eivé understood any aspect of my character, that she could best appreciate was the outraged tenderness which forbade me to look on hers as ordinary guilt. Acutely sensitive to pain and fear, she had both known the better to what terror might prompt the injured, and was the more appalled by the prospect. Her eagerness to accept by anticipation whatever degradation and pain domestic power could inflict, when released by the terrible alternative of legal prosecution from its usual limits, breathed more of doubt and terror than of shame or penitence. But at first it keenly affected me. It was with something akin to a bodily pang that I heard this fragile girl, so easily subdued by such rebuke or menace as her companions would scarcely have affected to fear, now pleading for punishment such as would have quelled the pride and courage of the most high-spirited of her sex. I felt the deepest pity, not so much for the fear with which she still trembled as for the agony of terror she must have previously endured. Eveena averted from her abject supplications a face in which I read much pain, but more of what would have been disgust in a less intensely sympathetic nature. And ere long I saw or felt in Eivé's manner that which caused me suddenly to dismiss Eveena from the room, as from a presence unfit for her spotless purity and exquisite delicacy. Finding in me no sign of passionate anger, no readiness, but reluctance to visit treason with physical pain, Eivé's own expression changed. Unable to conceive the feeling that rendered the course she had at first expected simply impossible to me, a nature I had utterly misconceived caught at an idea few

women, not experienced in the worst of life's lessons, would have entertained. The tiny fragile form, the slight limbs whose delicate proportions seemed to me almost those of infancy, their irrepressible quivering plainly revealed by the absence of robe and veil, no man worthy of the name could have beheld without intense compassion. But such a feeling she could not realise. As her features lost the sincerity of overwhelming fear, as the drooping lids failed for one moment to conceal a look of almost assured exultation in the dark eyes, my soul was suddenly and thoroughly revolted. I had forgiven the hand aimed at a heart that never throbbed with a pulse unkind to her. I might have forgotten the treason that required tenderness and trust by seeking my life; but I could never forget, never recover, that moment's insight into thoughts that so outraged an affection which, if my conscience belied me not, was absolutely stainless and unselfish.

It cost a strong persistent effort of self-control to address her again. But a confession full and complete my duty to others compelled me to enforce. The story of the next hour I never told or can tell. To one only did I give a confidence that would have rendered explanation natural; and that one was the last to whom I could have spoken on this subject. Enough that the charming infantine simplicity had disguised an elaborate treachery of which I reluctantly learned that human nature is capable. The caressed and caressing child had sold my life, if not her own soul, for the promise of wealth that could purchase nothing I denied her, and of the first place among the women of her world. That

promise I soon found had not been warranted, directly or indirectly, by him who alone could at present fulfil it. Needless to relate the details either of the confession or its extortion. Enough that Eivé learnt at last perforce that though I had, as it seemed to her, been fool enough to spare her the vengeance of the law, and to spare her still as far as possible, her power to fool me further was gone for ever. Needless to speak of the lies repeated and sustained, till truth was wrung from quivering lips and sobbing voice; of the looks that appealed long and incredulously to a love as utterly forfeited as misunderstood. To the last Eivé could not comprehend the nature that, having spared her so much, would not spare wholly; the mercy felt for the weakness, not for the charms of youth and sex. Shamed, grieved, wounded to the quick, I quitted the presence of one who, I fear, was as little worth the anguish I then endured for her, as the tenderness she had so long betrayed; and left the late darling of my house a prisoner under strict guard, necessary for the safety of others than ourselves.

Finding a message awaiting me, I sought at once the interview which the Sovereign fearlessly granted.

"I see," said the Prince with much feeling, as he received my salute, "that you have gone through deeper pain than such domestic losses can well cause to *us*. I am sorry that you are grieved. I can say no more, and perhaps the less I say the less pain I shall give. Only permit me this remark. Since I have known you, it has seemed to me that the utter distinction between our character and yours, showing as it does at so many points, springs from some single root-difference. We,

so careful of our own life and comfort, care little for those of others. We, so afraid of pain, are indifferent to its infliction, unless we have to witness it, and only some of us flinch from the sight. The softness of heart you show in this trouble seems in some strange way associated with the strength of heart which you have proved in dangers, the least of which none of us would have encountered willingly, and which, forced on us, would have unnerved us all. I am glad to prove to you that to some extent I depart from my national character and approach, however, distantly, to yours. I can feel for a friend's sorrow, and I can face what you seem to consider a real danger. But you had a purpose in asking this audience. My ears are open—your lips are unsealed."

"Prince," I replied, "what you have said opens the way to that I wished to ask. You say truly that courage and tenderness have a common root, as have the unmanly softness and equally unmanly hardness common among your subjects. Those for whom death ends all utterly and for ever will of necessity, at least as soon as the training of years and of generations has rendered their thought consistent, dread death with intensest fear, and love to brighten and sweeten life with every possible enjoyment. Animal enjoyment becomes the most precious, since it is the keenest. Higher pleasures lose half their value, when the distinction between the two is reduced to the distinction between the sensations of higher and lower nerve centres. Thus men care too much for themselves to care for others; and after all, strong deep affection, entwined with the heartstrings, can only torture and

tear the hearts for which death is a final parting. Such love as I have felt for woman—even such love as I felt for her, your gift, whom I have lost—would be pain intolerable if the thought were ever present that one day we must, and any day we might, part for ever. I put the knife against my breast, my life in your hand, when I say this, and I ask of you no secrecy, no favour for myself; but that, as I trust you, you will guard the life that is dearest to me if you take from me the power to guard it. . . . There are those among your subjects who are not the cowards you find around your throne, who are not brutal in their households, not incapable of tenderness and sacrifice for others.”

As I spoke I carefully watched the Prince's face, on which no shade of displeasure was visible; rather the sentiment of one who is somewhat gratified to hear a perplexing problem solved in a manner agreeable to his wishes.

“And the reason is,” I continued, “that these men and women believe or know that they are answerable to an eternal Sovereign mightier than yourself, and that they will reap, not perhaps here, but after death as they shall have sown; that if they do not forfeit the promise by their own deed, they shall rejoin here—after those dearest to them here.”

“There are such?” he said. “I would they were known to me. I had not dreamed that there were in my realm men who would screen the heart of another with their own palm.”

“Prince,” I replied earnestly, “I as their ambassador, as one of their leaders, appeal to you to know and to protect them. They can defend themselves at need,

and, it may be, might prevail though matched one against a thousand. For their weapons are those against which no distance, no defences, no numbers afford protection. But in such a strife many of their lives must be lost, and infinite suffering and havoc wrought on foes they would willingly spare. They are threatened with extermination by secret spite or open force; but open force will be the last resort of enemies well aware that those who strike at the Star have ever been smitten by the lightning."

A slight change in his countenance satisfied me that the Emblem was not unknown to him.

"You say," he replied, "that there is an organised scheme to destroy these people by force or fraud?"

"The scheme, Prince, was confessed in my own hearing by one of its instruments; and in proof thereof, my own life, as a Chief of the Order, was attempted this morning."

The Prince sprang to his feet in all the passion of a man who for the first time receives a personal insult; of an Autocrat stung to the quick by an unprecedented outrage to his authority and dignity.

"Who has dared?" he said. "Who has taken on himself to make law, or form plans for carrying out old law, without my leave? Who has dared to strike at the life over which I have cast the shadow of my throne? Give me their names, my guest, and, before the evening mist closes in to-morrow, pronounce their doom."

"I cannot obey your royal command. I have no proof against the only man who, to my knowledge, can desire my death. Those who actually and immediately aimed at my life are shielded by the inviolable weak-

ness of sex from the revenge and even the justice of manhood."

"Each man," returned the Prince, but partially conceiving my meaning, "is master at home. I wish I were satisfied that your heart will let you deal justly and wisely with the most hateful offspring of the most hateful of living races—a woman who betrays the life of her lord. But those who planned a general scheme of destruction—a purpose of public policy—without my knowledge, must aim also at my life and throne; for even were their purpose such as I approved, attempted without my permission, they know I would never pardon the presumption. I do not sit in Council with dull ears, or silent lips, or empty hands; and it is not for the highest more than for the lowest under me to snatch my sceptre for a moment."

"Guard then your own," I said. "Without your leave and in your lifetime, open force will scarcely be used against us; and if against secret murder or outrage we appeal to the law, you will see that the law does justice?"

"I will," he replied; "and I pardon your advice to guard my own, because you judge me by my people. But a Prince's life is the charge of his guards; the lives of his people are his care."

He was silent for a few minutes, evidently in deep reflection.

"I thank you," he said at last, "and I give you one warning in partial return for yours. There is a law which can be used against the members of a secret society with terrible effect. Not only are they exposed to death if detected, but those who strike them are

legally exempt from punishment. I will care that that law shall not menace you long. Whilst it remains guard yourselves ; I am powerless to break it."

As I quitted the Palace, Ergimo joined me and mounted my carriage. Seizing a moment when none were within sight or hearing, he said—

"Astona was found two hours ago dead, as an enemy or a traitor dies. She was seen to fall from the roof of her house, and none was near her when she fell. But Davilo has already been arrested as her murderer, on the ground that he was heard before sunrise this morning to say that she must die."

"Who heard that must have heard more. Let this news be quickly known to whom it concerns."

I checked the carriage instantly, and turned into a road that conducted us in ten minutes to a public telegraph office.

"Come with me," I said, "quickly. As an officer of the Camptâ your presence may ensure the delivery of letters which might otherwise be stopped."

He seized the hint at once, and as we approached a vacant desk he said to the nearest officer, "In the Camptâ's name ;" a form which ensured that the most audacious and curious spy, backed by the highest authority save that invoked, dared neither stop nor search into a message so warranted. Before I left the desk every Chief of the Zinta at his several post had received, through that strange symbolic language of which I have already given samples, from me advice of what had occurred and from Esmo warning to meet at an appointed place and time.

The day at whose close we should meet was that of

Davilo's trial. I mingled with the crowd around the Court doors, a crowd manifesting bitter hostility to the prisoner and to the Order, of whose secrets a revelation was eagerly expected. Easily forcing my way through the mass, I felt on a sudden a touch, a sign; and turning my eyes saw a face I had surely never looked on before. Yet the sign could only have been given by a colleague. That which followed implied the presence of the Signet itself.

"I told you," whispered a voice I knew well, "how completely we can change even countenance at will."

It was so; but though acquainted with the process, I had never believed that the change could be so absolute. By help of my strength and height, still more perhaps by the subtle influence of his own powerful will acting none the less imperiously on minds unconscious of its influence, Esmo made his way with me into the Court.

Around five sides of the hexagon were seats, tier above tier, appropriated to the public who wish to see as well as hear. The phonograph reported every word uttered to hundreds of distant offices. Against the sixth side were placed the seats of the seven judges; in front, at an equal elevation, the chair of the prisoner, the seats of the advocates on right and left, and the place from which each witness must deliver his testimony in full view and within easy hearing both of the bench, the bar, and the audience. Davilo sat in his chair unguarded, but in an attitude strangely constrained and motionless. Only his bright eyes moved freely, and his head turned a little from side to side. He recognised us instantly, and his look expressed no trace of fear.

"The *quárry*," whispered Esmo, observing my per-

plexity. "It paralyses the nerves of motion, leaving those of sensation active; and is administered to a prisoner on the instant of his arrest, so as to keep him absolutely helpless till his sentence is executed, or till on his acquittal an antidote is administered."

The counsel for the prosecution stated in the briefest possible words the story of Astona, from the moment when she left my house to that at which she was found dead, and the method of her death; related Davilo's words, and then proceeded to call his witnesses. Of course the one vital question was whether by possibility Davilo, who had never left my premises since the words were uttered, could have brought about a death, evidently accidental in its immediate cause, at a distance of many miles. His words were attested by one whom I recognised as an officer of Endo Zamptâ, and I was called to confirm or contradict them. The presiding judge, as I took my place, read a brief telling terrible menace, expounding the legal penalties of perjury.

"You will speak the truth," he said, "or you know the consequences."

As he spoke, he encountered Esmo's eyes, and quailed under the gaze, sinking back into his seat motionless as the bird under the alleged fascination of the serpent. I admitted that the words in question had been addressed to me; and I proved that Davilo had been busily engaged with me from that moment until an hour later than that of the fatal accident. There being thus no dispute as to the facts, a keen contest of argument proceeded between the advocates on either side. The defenders of the prisoner ridiculed with an affectation of scientific contempt—none the less effective because the

chief pleader was himself an experienced member of our Order—the idea that the actions or fate of a person at a distance could be affected by the mere will of another; and related, as absurd and incredible traditions of old to this purport, some anecdotes which had been communicated to me as among the best attested and most striking examples of the historical exercise of the mystic powers. The able and bigoted sceptics, who prosecuted this day in the interests of science, insisted, with equal inconsistency and equal skill, on the innumerable recorded and attested instances of some diabolical power possessed by certain supposed members of a detested and malignant sect. A year ago the judges would probably have sided unanimously with the former. But the feeling that animated the conspiracy, if it should be so called, against the Zinta, had penetrated all Martial society; and in order to destroy the votaries of religion, Science, in the persons of her most distinguished students, was this day ready to abjure her character, and forswear her most cherished tenets. As has often happened in Mars, and may one day happen on Earth as the new ideas come into greater force, proven fact was deliberately set against logical impossibility; and for once—what probably had not happened in Mars for ten thousand years—proven fact and common sense carried the day against science and “universal experience;” but, unhappily, against the prisoner. After retiring separately for about an hour, the Judges returned. Their brief and very confused decisions were read by the Secretary. The reasons were seldom intelligible, each contradicting himself and all his colleagues, and not one among the judg-

ments having even the appearance of cohesion and consistency. But, by six to one, they doomed the prisoner to the vivisection-table. As he was carried forth his eyes met ours, and the perfect calm and steadiness of their glance astounded me not a little.

My natural thought prompted, of course, an appeal to the mercy of the Throne. In every State a power of giving effect in the law's despite to public policy, or of commanding that, in certain strange and unforeseen circumstances, common sense and practical justice shall override a sentence which no court bound by the letter of the law can withhold, must rest with the Sovereign. But in Mars the prerogative of mercy, in the proper sense of the word—judicial rather than political mercy—is exercised less by the Prince himself than by a small council of judges advising him and pronouncing their decision in his name. Even if we could have relied on the *Camptâ* with absolute confidence, there were many reasons against an appeal which would, in fact, have asked him to declare himself on our side. While such a declaration might, in the existing state of public feeling, have caused revolt or riot, it would have put on their guard, perhaps driven to a premature attempt which he was not prepared to meet, the traitors whose scheme against his life the Prince felt confident that he should speedily detect and punish.

All these considerations were brought before our Council, whose debate was brief but not hurried or excited. The supreme calm of Esmo's demeanour communicated itself to all the eleven, in not one of whom could I recognise till they spoke my colleagues of our last Council. The order went forth that a party should

attend Esmo's orders at a point about half a mile distant from the studio in which, for the benefit of a great medical school, my unhappy friend was to be put to torture indescribable.

"Happily," said Esmo, "the first portion of the experiment will be made by the Vivisector-General alone, and will commence at midnight. Half an hour before that time our party will be assembled."

I had insisted on being one of the band, and Esmo had very reluctantly yielded to the unanimous approval of colleagues who thought that on this occasion physical strength might render essential service at some unforeseen crisis. Moreover, the place lying within my geographical province, several of those engaged looked up to me as their immediate chief, and it was thought well to place me on such an occasion at their head.

The night was, as had been predicted, absolutely dark, but the roads were brilliantly lighted. Suddenly, however, as we drew towards the point of meeting, the lights went out, an accident unprecedented in Martial administration.

"But they will be relighted!" said one of my companions.

"Can human skill relight the lamps that the power of the Star has extinguished?" was the reply of another.

We fell in in military order, with perfect discipline and steadiness, under the influence of Esmo's silent will and scarcely discernible gestures. The wing of the college in which the dissection was to take place was guarded by some forty sentinels, armed with the spear and lightning gun. But as we came close to them, I

observed that each stood motionless as a statue, with eyes open, but utterly devoid of sight.

"I have been here before you," murmured Esmo. "To the left."

The door gave way at once before the touch of some electric instrument or immaterial power wielded by his hand. We passed in, guided by him, through one or two chambers, and along a passage, at the end of which a light shone through a crystal door. Here proof of Esmo's superior judgment was afforded. He would fain have had the party much smaller than it was, and composed exclusively of the very few old and experienced members of the Zinta within reach at the moment. We were nearly a score in number, some even more inexperienced than myself, half the party my own immediate followers; and I remembered far better the feelings of a friend and a soldier than the lessons of the college or the Shrine. As the door opened, and we caught sight of our friend stretched on the vivisection table, the younger of the company, hurried on by my own example, lost their heads and got, so to speak, out of hand. We rushed tumultuously forward and fell on the Vivisector and two assistants, who stood motionless and perhaps unconscious, but with glittering knives just ready for their fiendish work. Before Esmo could interpose, these executioners were cut down with the "crimson blade" (cold steel); and we bore off our friend with more of eagerness and triumph than at all befitted our own consciousness of power, or suited the temper of our Chief.

Never did Esmo speak so sharply or severely as in the brief reprimand he gave us when we reassembled;

the justice of which I instinctively acknowledged, as he ceased, by the salute I had given so often at the close of less impressive and less richly deserved reprimands on the parade ground or the march. Uninjured, and speedily relieved from the effects of the *qudrry*, Davilo was carried off to a place of temporary concealment, and we dispersed.

Eveena heard my story with more annoyance than interest, mortified not a little by the reproof I had drawn upon myself and my followers; and, despite her reluctance to seem to acknowledge a fault in me, apparently afraid that a similar ebullition of feeling might on some future occasion lead to serious disaster.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AZRAEL.

To detain as a captive and a culprit, thus converting my own house into a prison, my would-be murderess and former plaything, was intolerably painful. To leave her at large was to incur danger such as I had no right to bring on others. To dismiss her was less perilous than the one course, less painful than the other, but combined peril and pain in a degree which rendered both Eveena and myself most reluctant to adopt it. From words of Esmo's, and from other sources, I gathered that the usual course under such circumstances would have been to keep the culprit under no other restraint than that confinement to the house which is too common to be remarkable, trusting to the terror which punishment inflicted and menaced by domestic authority would inspire. But Eivé now understood the limits which conscience or feeling imposed on the use of an otherwise unlimited power. She knew very nearly how much she could have to fear; and, timid as she was, would not be cowed or controlled by apprehensions so defined and bounded. Eveena herself naturally resented the peril, and was

revolted by the treason even more intensely than myself; and was for once hardly content that so heinous a crime should be so lightly visited. In interposing between the culprit and the horrors of the law, she had taken for granted the strenuous exertion of a domestic jurisdiction almost as absolute under the circumstances as that of ancient Rome.

"What suggested to you," I asked one day of Eveena, "the suspicion that so narrowly saved my life?"

"The carefully steadied hand—you have teased her so often for spilling everything it carried—and the unsteady eyes. But," she added reluctantly, "I never liked to watch her—no, not lest you should notice it—but because she did not seem true in her ways with you; and I should have missed those signs but for a strange warning." . . . She paused.

"I would not be warned," I answered with a bitter sigh. "Tell me, Madonna."

"It was when you left me in this room alone," she said, her exquisite delicacy rendering her averse to recal, not the coercion she had suffered, but the pain she knew I felt in so coercing her. "Dearest," she added with a sudden effort, "let me speak frankly, and dispel the pain you feel while you think over it in silence."

I kissed the hand that clasped my own, and she went on, speaking with intentional levity.

"Had a Chief forgotten?" tracing the outline of a star upon her bosom. "Or did you think Clavelta's daughter had no share in the hereditary gifts of her family?"

"But how did you unlock the springs?"

"Ah! those might have baffled me if you had trusted to them. You made a double mistake when you left Enva on guard. . . . You don't think I tempted her to disobey? Eager as I was for release, I could not have been so doubly false. She did it unconsciously. It is time to put her out of pain."

"Does she know me so little as to think I could mean to torture her by suspense? Besides, even she must have seen that you had secured her pardon."

"Or my own punishment," Eveena answered.

"Spare me such words, Eveena, unless you mean to make me yet more ashamed of the compulsion I did employ. I never spoke, I never thought"——

"Forgive me, dearest. Will it vex you to find how clearly your flower-bird has learned to read your will through your eyes? When I refused to obey, and you felt yourself obliged to compel, your first momentary thought was to threaten, your next that I should not believe you. When you laid your hand upon my shoulder, thus, it was no gesture of anger or menace. You thought of the only promise I must believe, and you dropped the thought as quickly as your hand. You would not speak the word you might have to keep. Nay, dearest, what pains you so? You gave me no pain, even when you called another to enforce your command. Yet surely you know that *that* must have tried my spirit far more than anything else you could do. You did well. Do you think that I did not appreciate your imperious anxiety for me; that I did not respect your resolution to do what you thought right, or feel how much it cost you? If anything in the ways of love like yours could pain me, it would

be the sort of reserved tenderness that never treats me as frankly and simply as" . . . There was no need to name either of those so dearly loved, so lately—and, alas! so differently—lost. "Trusting the loyalty of my love so absolutely in all else, can you not trust it to accept willingly the enforcement of your will . . . as you have enforced it on all others you have ruled, from the soldiers of your own world to the rest of your household? Ah! the light breaks through the mist. Before you gave Enva her charge you said to me in her presence, 'Forgive me what you force upon me;' as if I, above all, were not your own to deal with as you will. Dearest, do you so wrong her who loves you, and is honoured by your love, as to fancy that any exertion of your authority could make her feel humbled in your eyes or her own?"

It was impossible to answer. Nothing would have more deeply wounded her simple humility, so free from self-consciousness, as the plain truth; that as her character unfolded, the infinite superiority of her nature almost awed me as something—save for the intense and occasionally passionate tenderness of her love—less like a woman than an angel.

"I was absorbed," she continued, "in the effort that had thrown Enva into the slumber of obedience. I did not know or feel where I was or what I had next to do. My thought, still concentrated, had forgotten its accomplished purpose, and was bent on your danger. Somehow on the cushioned pile I seemed to see a figure, strange to me, but which I shall never forget. It was a young girl, very slight, pale, sickly, with dark circles round the closed eyes, slumbering like Enva, but in

everything else Enva's very opposite. I suppose I was myself entranced or dreaming, conscious only of my anxiety for you, so that it seemed natural that everything should concern you. I remember nothing of my dream but the words which, when I came to myself in the peristyle, alone, were as clear in my memory as they are now :—

' Watch the hand and read the eyes ;
On his breast the danger lies—
Strength is weak and childhood wise.

' Fail the bowl, and—'ware the knife !
Rests on him the Sovereign's life,
Rests the husband's on the wife.

' They that would his power command
Know who holds his heart in hand :
Silken tress is surest band.

' Well they judge Kargynda's mood,
Steel to peril, pain, and blood,
Surely through his mate subdued.

' Love can make the strong a slave,
Fool the wise and quell the brave . . .
Love by sacrifice can save.' "

" She again ! " I exclaimed involuntarily.

" You hear," murmured Eveena. " In kindness to me heed my warning, if you have neglected all others. Do not break my heart in your mercy to another. Eivé"—

" *Eivé* !—The prophetess knows me better than you do ! The warning means that they now desire my secret before my life, and scheme to make *your* safety the price of my dishonour. It is the Devil's thought—or the Regent's ! "

As I could not decide to send Eivé forth without home, protection, or control, and Eveena could suggest no other course, the days wore on under a domestic thunder-cloud which rendered the least sensitive among us uncomfortable and unhappy, and deprived three at least of the party of appetite, of ease, and almost of sleep, till two alarming incidents broke the painful stagnation.

I had just left Eivé's prison one morning when Eveena, who was habitually entrusted with the charge of these communications, put into my hands two slips of tafroo. The one had been given her by an amba, and came from Davilo's substitute on the estate. It said simply: "You and you alone were recognised among the rescuers of your friend. Before two days have passed an attempt will be made to arrest you." The other came from Esmo, and Eveena had brought it to me unread, as was indeed her practice. I could not bear to look at her, though I held her closely, as I read aloud the brief message which announced the death, by the sting of two dragons (evidently launched by some assassin's hand, but under circumstances that rendered detection by ordinary means hopeless for the moment), of her brother and Esmo's son, Kevimâ; and invited us to a funeral ceremony peculiar to the Zinta. I need not speak of the painful minutes that followed, during which Eveena strove to suppress for my sake at once her tears for her loss and her renewed and intensified terror on my own account. It was suddenly announced by the usual signs of the mute messenger that a visitor awaited me in the hall. Ergimo brought a message from the Camptâ, which ran as follows:—

"Aware that their treachery is suspected, the enemy now seek your secret first, and then your life. Guard both for a very short time. Your fate, your friends', and my own are staked on the issue. The same Council that sends the traitors to the rack will see the law repealed."

I questioned Ergimo as to his knowledge of the situation.

"The enemy," he said, "must have changed their plan. One among them, at least, is probably aware that his treason is suspected both by his Sovereign and by the Order. This will drive him desperate; and if he can capture you and extort your secret, he will think he can use it to effect his purpose, or at least to ensure his escape. He may think open rebellion, desperate as it is, safer than waiting for the first blow to come from the Zinta or from the Palace."

My resolve was speedily taken. At the same moment came the necessity for escape, and the opportunity and excuse. I sought out the writer of the first message, who entirely concurred with me in the propriety of the step I was about to take; only recommending me to apply personally for a passport from the Campâtâ, such as would override any attempt to detain me even by legal warrant. He undertook to care for those I left behind; to release and provide for Eivé, and to see, in case I should not return, that full justice was done to the interests of the others, as well as to their claim to release from contracts which my departure from their world ought, like death itself, to cancel. The royal passport came ere I was ready to depart, expressed in the fullest, clearest language, and

such as none, but an officer prepared instantly to rebel against the authority which gave it, dared defy. During the last preparations, Velna and Eveena were closeted together in the chamber of the former; nor did I care to interrupt a parting the most painful, save one, of those that had this day to be undergone. I went myself to Eivé.

"I leave you," I said, "a prisoner, not, I hope, for long. If I return in safety, I will then consider in what manner the termination of your confinement can be reconciled with what is due to myself and others. If not, you will be yet more certainly and more speedily released. And now, child whom I once loved, to whom I thought I had been especially gentle and indulgent, was the miserable reward offered you the sole motive that raised your hand against my life? Poison, I have always said, is the protection of the household slave against the domestic tyrant. If I had ever been harsh or unjust to you, if I had made your life unhappy by caprice or by severity, I could understand. But you of all have had least reason to complain. Not Enva's jealous temper, not Leenoo's spite, ever suggested to them the idea which came so easily and was so long and deliberately cherished in your breast."

She rose and faced me, and there was something of contempt in the eyes that answered mine for this once with the old fearless frankness.

"I had no reason to hate you? Not certainly for the kind of injury which commonly provokes women to risk the lives their masters have made intolerable. That your discipline was the lightest ever known in a

household, I need not tell you. That it fell more lightly, if somewhat oftener, on me than on others, you know as well as I. Put all the correction or reproof I ever received from you into one, and repeat it daily, and never should I have complained, much less dreamed of revenge. You think Enva or Leenoo might less unnaturally, less unreasonably, have turned upon you, because your measure to their faults was somewhat harder and your heart colder to them! You did not scruple to make a favourite of me after a fashion, as you would never have done even of Eunane. You could pet and play with me, check and punish me, as a child who would not 'sicken at the sweets, or be humbled by the sandal.' You forbore longer, you dealt more sternly with them, because, forsooth, they were women and I a baby. I, who was not less clever than Eunane, not less capable of love, perhaps of devotion to you, than Eveena, I might rest my head on your knee when she was by, I might listen to your talk when others were sent away; I was too much the child, too little the woman, to excite your distrust or her jealousy. Do you suppose I think better of you, or feel the more kindly towards you, that you have not taken vengeance? No! still you have dealt with me as a child; so untaught yet by that last lesson, that even a woman's revenge cannot make you treat me as a woman! *Clasfempta!* you bear, I believe, outside, the fame of a wise and a firm man; but in these little hands you have been as weak a fool as the veriest dotard might have been;—and may be yet."

"As you will," I answered, stung into an anger which at any rate quelled the worst pain I had felt when I

entered the room. "Fool or sage, Eivé, I was your fellow-creature, your protector, and your friend. When bitter trouble befalls you in life, or when, alone, you find yourself face to face with death, you may think of what has passed to-day. Then remember, for your comfort, my last words—I forgive you, and I wish you happy."

To Velna I could not speak. Sure that Eveena had told her all she could wish to know or all it was safe to tell, a long embrace spoke my farewell to her who had shared with me the first part of the long watch of the death-chamber. Enva and her companions had gathered, not from words, that this journey was more than an ordinary absence. Some instinct or presentiment suggested to them that it might, possibly at least, be a final parting; and I was touched as much as surprised by the tears and broken words with which they assured me that, greatly as they had vexed my home life, conscious as they were that they had contributed to it no element but bitterness and trouble, they felt that they had been treated with unfailing justice and almost unfailing kindness. Then, turning to Eveena, Enva spoke for the rest—

"We should have treated you less ill if we could at all have understood you. We understand you just as little now. Clafempta is man after all, bridling his own temper as a strong man rules a large household of women or a herd of *ambau*. But you are not woman like other women; and yet, in so far as women are or think they are softer or gentler than men, so far, twelve-fold twelve times told, are you softer, tenderer, gentler than woman."

Eveena struggled hard so far to suppress her sobs as

to give an answer. But, abandoning the effort, she only kissed warmly the lips, and clasped long and tenderly the hands, that had never spoken a kind word or done a kind act for her. At the very last moment she faltered out a few words which were not for them.

"Tell Eivé," she said, "I wish her well; and wishing her well, I cannot wish her happy—*yet*."

We embarked in the balloon, attended as on our last journey by two of the brethren in my employment, both, I noticed, armed with the lightning gun. I myself trusted as usual to the sword, strong, straight, heavy, with two edges sharp as razors, that had enabled my hand so often to guard my head; and the air-gun that reminded me of so many days of sport, the more enjoyed for the peril that attended it. Screened from observation, both reclining in our own compartment of the car, Eveena and I spent the long undisturbed hours of the first three days and nights of our journey in silent interchange of thought and feeling that seldom needed or was interrupted by words. Her family affections were very strong. Her brother had deserved and won her love; but conscious so long of a peril surrounding myself, fearfully impressed by the incident which showed how close that peril had come, her thought and feeling were absorbed in me. So, could they have known the present and foreseen the future, even those who loved her best and most prized her love for them would have wished it to be. As we crossed, at the height of a thousand feet, the river dividing that continent between east and west which marks the frontier of Elcavoo, a slight marked movement of agitation, a few eager whispers of consultation, in the other compartment called my attention.

As I parted the screen, the elder of the attendant brethren addressed me—

"There is danger," he said in a low tone, not low enough to escape Eveena's quick ear when my safety was in question. "Another balloon is steering right across our path, and one in it bears, as we see through the *pavlo* (the spectacle-like double field-glass of Mars), the sash of a Regent, while his attendants wear the uniform of scarlet and grey" (that of Endo Zamptâ). "Take, I beg you, this lightning-piece. Will you take command, or shall we act for you?"

Parting slightly the fold of the mantle I wore, for at that height, save immediately under the rays of the sun, the atmosphere is cold, I answered by showing the golden sash of my rank. We went on steadily, taking no note whatever of the hostile vessel till it came within hailing distance.

"Keep your guns steadily pointed," I said, "happen what may. If you have to fire, fire one at any who is ready to fire at us, the other at the balloon itself."

A little below but beside us Endo Zamptâ hailed. "I arrest you," he said, addressing me by name, "on behalf of the Arch-Court and by their warrant. Drop your weapons or we fire."

"And I," I said, "by virtue of the Camptâ's sign and signet attached to this," and Eveena held forth the paper, while my weapon covered the Regent, "forbid you to interrupt or delay my voyage for a moment."

I allowed the hostile vessel to close so nearly that Endo could read through his glass the characters—purposely, I thought, made unusually large—of his Sovereign's peremptory passport. To do so he had dropped

his weapon, and his men, naturally expecting a peaceable termination to the interview, had laid down theirs. Mine had obeyed my order, and we were masters of the situation, when, with a sudden turn of the screw, throwing his vessel into an almost horizontal position, Endo brought his car into collision with ours and endeavoured to seize Eveena's person, as she leaned over with the paper in her hand. She was too quick for him, and I called out at once, "Down, or we fire." His men, about to grasp their pieces, saw that one of ours was levelled at the balloon, and that before they could fire, a single shot from us must send them earthwards, to be crushed into one shapeless mass by the fall. Endo saw that he had no choice but to obey or affect obedience, and, turning the tap that let out the gas by a pipe passing through the car, sent his vessel rapidly downward, as with a formal salute he affected to accept the command of his Prince. Instantly grasping, not the lightning gun, which, if it struck their balloon, must destroy their whole party in an instant, but my air-gun, which, by making a small hole in the vast surface, would allow them to descend alive though with unpleasant and perilous rapidity, I fired, and by so doing prevented the use of an asphyxiator concealed in the car, which the treacherous Regent was rapidly arranging for use.

The success of these manœuvres delighted my attendants, and gave them a confidence they had not yet felt in my appreciation of Martial perils and resources. We reached Ecasfe and Esmo's house without further molestation, and a party of the Zinta watched the balloon while Eveena and I passed into the dwelling.

Preserved from corruption by the cold which Martial

chemistry applies at pleasure, the corpse of Kevima looked as the living man looked in sleep, but calmer and with features more perfectly composed. Quietly, gravely, with streaming tears, but with self-command which dispelled my fear of evil consequences to her, Eveena kissed the lips that were so soon to exist no longer. From the actual process by which the body is destroyed, the taste and feeling of the Zinta exclude the immediate relatives of the dead; and not till the golden chest with its inscription was placed in Esmo's hands did we take further part in the proceeding. Then the symbolic confession of faith, by which the brethren attest and proclaim their confidence in the universal all-pervading rule of the Giver of life and in the permanence of His gift, was chanted. A Chief of the Order pronounced a brief but touching eulogy on the deceased. Another expressed on behalf of all their sympathy with the bereaved father and family. Consigned to their care, the case that contained all that now remained to us of the last male heir of the Founder's house was removed for conveyance to the mortuary chamber of the subterrene Temple. But ere those so charged had turned to leave the chamber in which the ceremony had passed, a flash so bright as at noonday to light up the entire peristyle and the chambers opening on it, startled us all; and a sentinel, entering in haste and consternation, announced the destruction of our balloon by a lightning flash from the weapon of some concealed enemy. Esmo, at this alarming incident, displayed his usual calm resolve. He ordered that carriages sufficient to convey some twenty-four of the brethren should be instantly collected, and announced

his resolve to escort us at once to the Astronaut. Before five minutes had elapsed from the destruction of the balloon, Zulve and the rest of the family had taken leave of Eveena and myself. Attended by the party mustered, occupying a carriage in the centre of the procession, we left the gate of the enclosure. I observed, what seemed to escape even Esmo's attention, that angry looks were bent upon us from many a roof, and that here and there groups were gathered in the enclosures and on the road, among whom I saw not a few weapons. I was glad to remember that a party of the Zveltau still awaited Esmo's return at his own residence. We drove as fast as the electric speed would carry us along the road I had traversed once before in the company of her who was now my wife—to be, I hoped, for the future my sole wife—and of him who had been ever since our mortal enemy. Where the carriages could proceed no further we dismounted, and Esmo mustered the party in order. All were armed with the spear and lightning gun. Placing Eveena in the centre of a solid square, Esmo directed me to take my place beside her. I expostulated—

“Clavelta, it is impossible for me to take the place of safety, when others who owe me nothing may be about to risk life on my behalf. Eveena, as woman and as descendant of the Founder, may well claim their protection. It is for me to share in her defence, not in her safety.”

He raised the arm that bore the Signet, and looked at me with the calm commanding glance that never failed to enforce his will.

“Take your place,” he said; and recalled to the

instincts of the camp, I raised my hand in the military salute so long disused, and obeyed in silence.

"Strike promptly, strike hard, and strike home," said Esmo to his little party. "The danger that may threaten us is not from the law or from the State, but from an attempt at murder through a perversion of the law and in the name of the Sovereign. Those who threaten us aim also at the Campâtâ's life, and those we may meet are his foes as well as ours. Conquered here, they can hardly assail us again. Victorious, they will destroy us, not leave us an appeal to the law or to the throne."

Placing himself a little in front of the troop, our Chief gave the signal to advance, and we moved forward. It seemed to me a fatal error that no scout preceded us, no flanking party was thrown out. This neglect reminded me that my comrades and commander were devoid of military experience, and I was about to remonstrate when, suddenly wheeling on the rocky platform on which I had first paused in my descent from the summit, and facing towards the latter, we encountered a force outnumbering our own as two to one and wearing the colours of the Regent. The front ranks quailed, as men always quailed under Esmo's steady gaze, and lost nerve and order as they fell back to right and left; a movement intended to give play to the asphyxiator they had brought with them. Their strategy was no less ridiculous than our own. Devoid for ages of all experience in conflict, both leaders might have learned better from the conduct of the therne at bay. The enemy were drawn up so near the turn that there was no room for the use of their most destructive

engine; and, had we been better prepared, neither this nor their lightning guns would have been quick enough to anticipate a charge that would have brought us hand to hand. Even had they been steady and prompt, the suffocating shell would probably have annihilated both parties, and the discharge would certainly have been as dangerous to them as to us. In another instant a flash from several of our weapons, simultaneously levelled, shattered the instrument to fragments. We advanced at a run, and the enemy would have given way at once but that their retreat lay up so steep an incline, and neither to right nor left could they well disperse, being hemmed in by a rocky wall on one side and a precipitous descent on the other. From our right rear, however, where the ground would have concealed a numerous ambush, I apprehended an attack which must have been fatal; but even so simple and decisive a measure had never occurred to the Regent's military ignorance.

At this critical moment a flash from a thicket revealed the weapon of some hidden enemy, who thus escaped facing the gaze that none could encounter; and Esmo fell, struck dead at once by the lightning-shot. The assassin sprang up, and I recognised the features of Endo Zamptâ. Confounded and amazed, the Zveltau broke and fell backward, hurrying Eveena away with them. Enabled by size and strength to extricate myself at once, I stood at bay with my back against the rocks on our left, a projection rising as high as my knee assisting to hinder the enemy from entirely and closely surrounding me. I had thrown aside at the moment of the attack the mantle that concealed my

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sash and star; and I observed that another Chief had done the same. It was he who, occupying at the trial the seat on Esmo's left, had shown the strongest disposition to mercy, and now displayed the coolest courage amid confusion and danger.

"Rally them," I cried to him, "and trust the crimson blade [cold steel]. These hounds will never face that."

The enemy had rushed forward as our men fell back, and I was almost in their midst, thus protected to a considerable extent from the lightning projectile, against which alone I had no defence. Hand to hand I was a match for more than one or two of my assailants, though on this occasion I wore no defensive armour, and they were clad in shirts of woven wire almost absolutely proof against the spear in hands like theirs.

To die thus, to die for her under her eyes, leaving to her widowed life a living token of our love—what more could Allah grant, what better could a lover and a soldier desire? There was no honour, and little to satisfy even the passion of vengeance, in the sword-strokes that clove one enemy from the shoulder to the waist, smote half through the neck of a second, and laid two or three more dead or dying at my feet. If the weight of the sword were lighter here than on Earth, the arm that wielded it had been trained in very different warfare, and possessed a strength which made the combat so unequal that, had no other life hung on my blows, I should have been ashamed to strike. As I paused for a moment under this feeling, I noted that, outside the space half cleared by slaughter and by terror, the bearers of the lightning gun were forming a sort of semicircle, embarrassed by the comrades

driven back upon them, but drawing momentarily nearer, and seeking to enclose before firing the object of their aim. They would have shattered my heart and head in another instant but that—springing on the projecting stone of which I have spoken, which raised her to my level—Eveena had flung her arms around me, and sheltered my person with her own. This, and the confusion, disconcerted the aim of most of the assailants. The roar and flash half stunned me for a moment;—then, as I caught her in my left arm, I became aware that it was but her lifeless form that I clasped to my breast. Giving her life for mine, she had made mine worse than worthless. My sword fell for a moment from my hand, retained only by the wrist-knot, as I placed her gently and tenderly on the ground, resting against the stone which had enabled her to effect the sacrifice I as little desired as deserved. Then, grasping my weapon again, and shouting instinctively the war-cry of another world, I sprang into the midst of the enemy. At the same moment, "*Ent dn Clazinta*" (To me the Zinta), cried the Chief behind; and having rallied the broken ranks, even before the sight of Eveena's fall had inspired reckless fury in the place of panic confusion, he led on the Zveltau, the spear in hand elevated over their heads, and pointed at the unprotected faces of the enemy. Exposed to the cold steel or its Martial equivalent, the latter, as I had predicted, broke at once. My sword did its part in the fray. They scarcely fought, neither did they fling down their weapons. But in that moment neither force nor surrender would have availed them. We gave no quarter to wounded or unwounded foe. When, for

lack of objects, I dropped the point of my streaming sword, I saw Endo Zamptâ alive and unwounded in the hands of the victors.

"Coward, scoundrel, murderer!" I cried. "You shall die a more terrible death than that which your own savage law prescribes for crimes like yours. Bind him; he shall hang from my vessel in the air till I see fit to let him fall! For the rest, see that none are left alive to boast what they have done this day."

Struggling and screaming, the Regent was dragged to the summit, and hung by the waist, as I had threatened, from the entrance window of the Astronaut. Esmo's body and those of the other slain among the Zvelttau had been raised, and our comrades were about to carry them to the carriages and remove them homeward. From the wardrobe of the Astronaut, furnished anew for our voyage, I brought a long soft therne-cloak, intended for Eveena's comfort; and wrapped in it all that was left to us of the loveliest form and the noblest heart that in two worlds ever belonged to woman. I shred one long soft tress of mingled gold and brown from those with which my hand had played; I kissed for the last time the lips that had so often counselled, pleaded, soothed, and never spoken a word that had better been left unsaid. Then, veiling face and form in the soft down, I called around me again the brethren who had fallen back out of sight of my last farewell, and gave the corpse into their charge. Turning with restless eagerness from the agony, which even the sudden shock that rendered me half insensible could not deaden into endurable pain, to the passion of revenge, I led two or three of our party to the foot of the ladder beneath the

entrance window of my vessel, and was about in their presence to explain his fate more fully to the struggling, howling victim, half mad with protracted terror. But at that moment my purpose was arrested. I had often repeated to Eveena passages from those Terrestrial works whose purport most resembled that of the mystic lessons she so deeply prized; and words, on which in life she had especially dwelt, seemed now to be whispered in my ear or my heart by the voice which with bodily sense I could never hear again:—"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." The absolute control of my will and conscience, won by her perfect purity and unfailing rectitude, outlasted Eveena's life. Turning to her murderer—

"You shall die," I said, "but you shall die not by revenge but by the law; and not by your own law, but by that which, forbidding that torture shall add to the sting of death, commands that 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Yet I cannot give you a soldier's death," as my men levelled their weapons. Cutting the cord that bound him, and grasping him from behind, I flung the wretch forth from the summit far into the air; well assured that he would never feel the blow that would dismiss his soul to its last account, before that Tribunal to whose judgment his victim had appealed. Then I entered the vessel, waved my hand in farewell to my comrades, and, putting the machinery in action, rose from the surface and prepared to quit a world which now held nothing that could detain or recal me.

CHAPTER XXX.

FAREWELL!

My task was not quite done. It was well for me in the first moments of this new solitude, of this maddening agony, that there was instant work imperatively demanding the attention of the mind as well as the exercise of the body. I had first, by means of the air pump, to fill the vessel with an atmosphere as dense as that in which I had been born and lived so long; then to close the entrance window and seal it hermetically, and then to arrange the steering gear. To complete the first task more easily, I arrested the motion of the vessel till she rose only a few feet per minute. Whilst employed on the air pump, I became suddenly aware, by that instinct by which most men have been at one time or another warned of the unexpected proximity of friend or foe, that I was not alone. Turning and looking in the direction of the entrance, I saw, or thought I saw, once more the Presence beheld in the Hall of the Zinta. But commanding, enthralling as were those eyes, they could not now retain my attention; for beside that figure appeared one whose presence in life or death left me no thought for aught beside. I sprang forward, seemed to touch her hand, to clasp her form, to reach the lips I bent my head to meet:—and then, in the midst of the bright sunlight, a momentary darkness veiled all

from my eyes. Lifting my head, however, my glance fell, through the window to which the Vision had drawn me, directly upon Ecasfe and upon the home from which I had taken her whose remains were now being carried back thither. Snatching up my field-glass, I scanned the scene of which I had thus caught a momentary and confused glimpse. The roof was occupied by a score of men armed with the lightning weapon, and among them glanced the familiar badge—the band and silver star. Clambering over the walls of the wide enclosure, and threatening to storm the house, were a mob perhaps a thousand in number, many of them similarly armed, the rest with staves, spears, or such rude weapons as chance might afford. Two minutes brought me immediately over them. In another, I was descending more rapidly than prudence would have suggested. The strife seemed for a moment to cease, as one of the crowd pointed, not to the impending destruction overhead, but to some object apparently at an equal elevation to westward. A shout of welcome from the remaining defenders of the house called right upward the eyes of their assailants. For an instant they felt the bitterness of death; a cry of agony and terror that pierced even the thick walls and windows of the Astronaut reached my ears. Then a violent shock threw me from my feet. Springing up, I knew what wholesale slaughter had avenged Eveena and her father, preserved her family, and given a last victory to the Symbol she so revered. In another instant I was on the roof, and my hands clasped in Zulve's.

"We know," she said. "Our darling's *esve* brought us a line that told all; and what is left of those who

were all to me, of her who was so much to you, will now be returned to us almost at once."

We were interrupted. A cry drew my eyes to the right, where, springing from a balloon to the car of which was attached a huge flag emblazoned with the crimson and silver colours of the Suzerain, Ergimo stood before us.

"I am too late," he said, "to save life; in time only to put an end to rebellion and avert murder. The Prince has fulfilled his promise to you; has repealed the law that was to be a weapon in the hands that aimed at his life and throne, as at the Star and its children. The traitors, save one, the worst, have met by this time their just doom. That one I am here to arrest. But where is our Chief? And," noticing for the first time the group of women, who in the violence of alarm and agony of sorrow had burst for once unconsciously the restraints of a lifetime—"where . . . Are you alone?"

"Alone for ever," I said; and as I spoke the procession that with bare and bent heads carried two veiled forms into the peristyle below told all he sought to know.

I need not dwell on the scene that followed. I scarcely remember anything, till a chest of gold, bearing the cipher which though seldom seen I knew so well, was placed in my hands. I turned to Zulve, and to Ergimo, who stood beside her.

"Have you need of me?" I said. "If I can serve her house I will remain willingly, and as long as I can help or comfort."

"No," replied Ergimo; for Zulve could not speak. "The household of Clavelta are safe and honoured henceforth as no other in the land. Something we must ask of him who is, at any rate for the present, the head of this household, and the representative of

the Founder's lineage. It may be," he whispered, "that another" (and his eyes fell on the veiled forms whose pink robes covered with dark crimson gauze indicated the younger matrons of the family) "may yet give to the Children of the Star that natural heir to the Signet we had hoped from your own household. But the Order cannot remain headless."

Here Zulve, approaching, gave into my hand the Signet unclasped from her husband's arm ere the coffer was closed upon his form. I understood her meaning; and, as for the time the sole male representative of the house, I clasped it on the arm of the Chief who succeeded to Esmo's rank, and to whom I felt the care of Esmo's house might be safely left. The due honour paid to his new office, I turned to depart. Then for the first time my eyes fell on the unveiled countenance and drooping form of one unlike, yet so like Eveena—her favourite and nearest sister, Zevle. I held out my hand; but, emotion overcoming the habits of reserve, she threw herself into my arms, and her tears fell on my bosom, hardly faster than my own as I stooped and kissed her brow. I had no voice to speak my farewell. But as the *Astronaut* rose for the last time from the ground, the voices of my brethren chanted in adieu the last few lines of the familiar formula—

"Peace be yours no force can break,
Peace not Death hath power to shake;
Peace from peril, fear, and pain;
Peace—until we meet again!
Not before the sculptured stone,
But the All-Commander's Throne."

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